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ABSTRACT

This monograph examines the nature of ethnicity as a general feature of human society, as it functions in Australia, and how it is used in the development of policy on multicultural education in Australia. Three influential accounts of ethnicity are examined, and it is argued that, although different, the theories share common problematics and similar sets of assumptions. Sections discuss the "revival" of ethnicity, the concept of ethnicity, the celebration of ethnicity in Australia, and the possibilities and problems of multiculturalism. The following additional readings are offered: (1) "From Race to Ethnicity" (M. de Lepervanche); (2) "Multiculturalism and Education Policy" (M. Kalantzis and B. Cope); and (3) "Really Educating Migrant Children" (P. Kringas). An annotated bibliography listing nine books on ethnicity is included. (CB)

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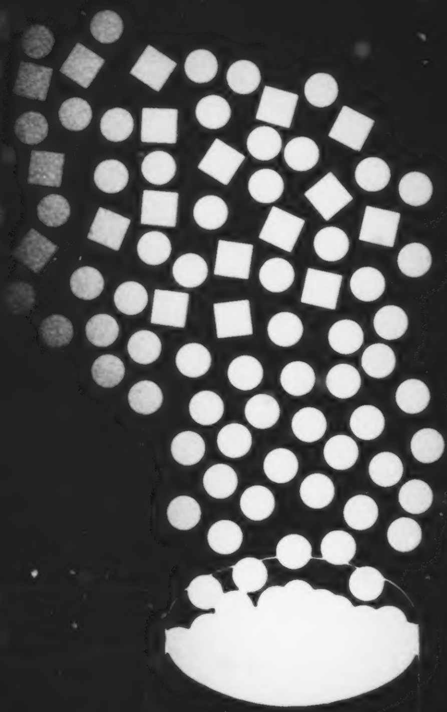
Ethnicity, class and multicultural education

FAZAL RIZVI



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Sociology of the school

Ethnicity, class and multicultural education

FAZAL RIZVI

Deakin University

Deakin University

This book forms part of the EED423 *Sociology of the School* course offered by the School of Education in Deakin University's Open Campus Program. It has been prepared for the EED423 *Sociology of the School* course team.

Course team
Lawrence Angus
David Dawkins (chairperson)
Kaye Lont (course developer)
Fazal Rizvi
Peter Watkins

Consultants
Jennifer Nias
Paige Porter

The course includes:
Lawrence Angus, *Schooling for Social Order*
David Dawkins, *Economics, Politics and Education*
Jennifer Nias, *Teacher Socialisation*
Paige Porter, *Gender and Education*
Fazal Rizvi, *Ethnicity, Class and Multicultural Education*
Peter Watkins, *High Tech, Low Tech and Education*

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Series introduction

One feature of education is the gap that exists between academic interests and teacher practice. The theoretical and research interests of academics, on the one hand, are not readily available to teachers; the practical concerns of teachers, on the other hand, may not be taken account of by academics.

It is hoped that this series of monographs will provide a link between academic thought and research and the practice of teaching. Each volume in the series discusses contemporary educational issues and research in a way that can inform educational practice. They do not provide a set of prescriptive recommendations, but present a discussion of theory and research with the intention of highlighting the implications for educational practice in a way that can inform teachers.

The issues discussed in this monograph series include: the relationship between the political and economic institutions of society and the education system, suggesting a link between socio-political conditions and educational policies and programs; the experience of teaching, emphasising the importance of the self-concept of teachers in their socialisation into a professional role; ethnicity and multicultural policy, suggesting that these are best understood in terms of social class and what this might mean for teachers; a view of gender-related inequalities in education that suggests that these are best understood in terms of ideology about the family; the impact of new technology on society and the implications this may have for education; and the possibilities that confront the education system and the practising teacher.

It is hoped that these monographs will clarify some of the complex issues confronting educationists and will stimulate thought and discussion among teachers that will inform their own practice and add to the continuing debate.

David Dawkins.

David Dawkins
Course team chairperson

Contents

Series introduction iii

Ethnicity, class and multicultural education 1

- Introduction 3
- The 'revival' of ethnicity 4
- The concept of ethnicity 7
  - Van den Berghe's primordialism 7
  - Barth's interpretive account of ethnicity 10
  - Glazer & Moynihan's view of ethnicity 13
- The celebration of ethnicity in Australia 17
  - The role of the state 18
  - Multicultural education 23
- Multiculturalism: Possibilities and problems 27
  - Multiculturalism's false problematic 29
  - Cultural relativism 33
  - Multiculturalism as an ideology 35
- Conclusion 37
- References 38

Readings 43

1 From race to ethnicity 45
M. de Lepervanche

2 Multiculturalism and education policy 73
M. Kalantzis & B. Cope

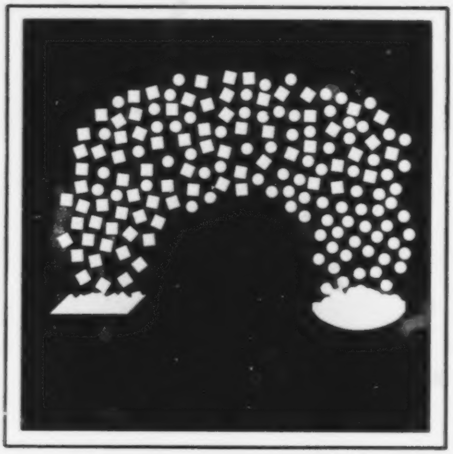
3 Really educating migrant children 86
P. Kringas

Annotated bibliography 97

About the author 101

Acknowledgments 102

Ethnicity, class and multicultural education



Introduction

The notion of ethnicity, in the past decade, has acquired considerable academic and political prominence in Australia. In sociological theory ethnicity as a explanatory category has been widely used to describe the nature of social relationships in pluralist countries. Marjoribanks (1980) has employed the notion of ethnicity to provide a detailed analysis of relations between family learning environment measures and children's affective and cognitive characteristics. Smith (1981) has spoken of an 'ethnic revival' to describe what he considers to be a major sociological phenomenon in modern social life. According to Glazer & Moynihan (1975), ethnicity is a conceptually autonomous notion which occupies a major place in contemporary sociological theory along with, perhaps even ahead of, such categories as class, nation and gender. Glazer & Moynihan (1975, p. 18) do not deny that class and nation are central concepts to be used to analyse contemporary society, but they insist that 'it is also true that we must add ethnicity as a major new focus for the mobilization of interests, troublesome both to those who wish to emphasize the primacy of class, and those who wish to emphasize the primacy of nation'.

The notion of ethnicity has not only been accorded the status of theoretical primacy by some scholars in sociological theory, it has also provided an important political focus in the development of the public policy of multiculturalism. A whole succession of government reports in Australia has emphasized the need to celebrate ethnic diversity in our community. Within the policy arena, there is now great deal of talk about identifying the special needs of 'ethnic minorities' in, for example, education, social and community services, housing and so on. There is now a separate television station, SBS, which supposedly caters for the cultural needs of the various ethnic groups in Australia. There are even ministers of the Crown at both the federal and state levels who oversee ethnic affairs. Political parties have begun to consider the nature, size and possible impact of the ethnic minority vote and what they might do to ensure that they win it. In the political arenas 'multiculturalism', an idea which encapulates the so-called revival of ethnicity, has now become an orthodoxy, with both major political parties extolling its virtues.

Within the educational sphere, there is pressure to ensure that teachers and administrators are aware of the distinct language and culture of 'ethnic minorities', and of the implications of these for teaching in schools. In some urban areas there has been consideration of the implications for religious instruction and co-educational schooling now that Muslim children of diverse backgrounds attend Australian schools. Teachers and curriculum advisers have been asked to consider the effects of the ethnocentricity of curriculum materials. To be consistent with the policy of multiculturalism, schools have been encouraged to provide courses in ethnic cultures and ethnic (community) languages. A highly influential government report, the Galbally Report (Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services for Migrants 1978), has emphasised further the importance of rethinking, in view of the ethnic presence in Australia, our educational policies so that *all* schools begin to develop in *all* children what the report refers to as a 'multicultural attitude' (p. 107).

In the context of these concerns, it is important that we consider the sociological status and the theoretical usefulness of the notion of 'ethnicity'. In this monograph I examine the nature of ethnicity as a general feature of human society, as well as the way it has manifested itself in a particular way here in Australia. In the first part of this monograph, I shall examine three influential accounts of ethnicity, and will argue that while these accounts, of van den Berghe (1981), Barth (1969) and Glazer & Moynihan (1975), are rooted in different theoretical perspectives, they nevertheless share a similar set of assumptions and a common problematic. I shall contend that it is these assumptions which have informed the current emphasis on ethnicity in Australia and its use in the development of the policy of multicultural education.

It is commonplace to think of ethnicity as involving communal ways of thinking, feeling and acting that constitute the essence of culture. All three accounts discussed in this monograph take cultural identity and affectivity to be the defining characteristic of ethnicity. Equally, however, all three accounts take culture at its face value, as something objectively given and therefore abstracted from its historical and structural circumstances. In contrast to this widely held view, I will argue that culture does not exist in a social vacuum, nor is it fixed or unchanging. Ethnic patterns, in so far as they involve cultural traditions, are related to historical and material contexts in which they are embedded. Accounts of van den Berghe (1981), Barth (1969), and Glazer & Moynihan (1975) are fundamentally misguided precisely because they define ethnic groups without reference to or in opposition to the class structure in the social formation of which the identified persons live.

This limitation has profound implications for multiculturalism and multicultural education. For one thing, it implies that the promotion of multiculturalism, in its present and official guise, has been hegemonic and ideological because it has served to diffuse and obscure the more fundamental issues of class inequality and the current patterns of social relations in Australia. Given this criticism, I will argue that multicultural education, which, in its popular form, involves no more than the simplistic cataloguing of superficial ethnic differences in the hope of developing a 'multicultural attitude' in children, is essentially misguided. A sounder approach to multicultural education would be to study the nature of the specific social relationships between ethnic groups which take place within the broader historical and political context. Moreover, instead of reifying ethnicity as a static category and creating the illusion that there is something ineffable about ethnic phenomena, teachers should encourage students to understand cultural attitudes in terms of their material and structural sources.

The 'revival' of ethnicity

There can be little doubt that 'ethnicity' as an explanatory category, as well as a focus for policy development, has acquired a pervasive presence in Australia. This fact raises the question of why, and how, this widespread and apparently esclating role of ethnicity in social life has come about. It is important to note that the concept of an 'ethnic group' has its origin in cultural anthropology, and that in recent years it has undergone considerable tranformation, especially since sociologists and political theorists have begun to use the concept to discuss issues located in urban industrial contexts. The concern of anthropologists to document differences between cultural traditions has now been replaced by the concern of sociologists who attempt to highlight ethnic differences in urban locations. But while anthropologists document differences between societies which may never have met each other, sociologists study ethnic groups which allegedly define themselves in terms of their economic and social relations with the other groups who comprise the broader society.

According to Smith (1981), the current sociological interest in ethnicity emerged as a result of the recognition by liberal theorists that their earlier cosmopolitan ideals, which involved the rationalistic expectation that cultural differences would disappear in modern society, were misguided. Smith argues that liberal theorists had generally taken the view that 'as mankind moved from a primitive, tribal stage of social organisation towards large-scale industrial societies, the various primordial ties of religion, language, ethnicity and race which divided it would gradually but inexorably lose their hold and disappear' (Smith 1981, p. 2). With mass migration and with the expansion of industrial capitalism, it was expected that there would emerge a time when it would be necessary to organise production and trade on a global scale. The rational use of labour would mean that old cultural differences and political divisions would become increasingly irrelevant. The growth of mass tourism, the expansion in communication systems and the standardisation of mass culture would inevitably lead, so thought the liberals, to a global cosmopolitan culture. According to Smith (1981), however, this foreshadowed dissolution of ethnicity has not occurred. Indeed, he maintains that modern history, if anything, has demonstrated that economic and industrial trends have tended to reinforce ethnic and cultural divisions.

The assimilationist and 'melting pot' integrationist policies which Australia followed after the world wars were broadly consistent with the liberal ideals identified by Smith. The policy of assimilation was deceptively simple and was couched in liberal democratic terms. It had stipulated that all Australians, regardless of their origin, were to gradually attain the same manner of living, come to share a common culture, live as members of a *single* Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities and observing the same customs (see Bullivant 1981). All Australians would be influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties. Post-Second World War immigrants from Europe, whose numbers have now significantly changed the cultural landscape of Australia, were thus expected to *assimilate* into the social and economic structures that had existed at that time. It was clear to all towards the end of the sixties, however, that assimilation was not as easily attainable as policy makers had thought. Successive studies (e.g. Jupp 1966; Martin 1978) clearly showed that not only was it difficult for migrants to shed their cultural traditions but also that many did not wish to do so.

It was also recognised that, contrary to the government rhetoric which claimed that migrants had an equal opportunity to take an equal and informed part in the creation and maintenance of Australian society; almost invariably, migrants occupied low-paid, low-status and insecure jobs at the lower end of the occupational structure, jobs which many native-born Australians were reluctant to accept (Birrell & Birrell 1981, p. 114). Lacking adequate educational support facilities, non-English-speaking immigrants found, moreover, that their disadvantages were reproduced for their children. Widespread racism and xenophobic attitudes of native-born Australians represented yet another structural barrier to migrants wishing to participate in Australian life.

By the mid-sixties the ideology of assimilation was clearly exposed. Far from promoting liberal and egalitarian ideals of a cosmopolitan society, assimilation represented a policy which enforced Anglo-conformity. It meant a denial of any significance to migrant cultures and life styles. The political recognition of this fact led, in the late sixties, to experiments with the policy of integration, imported to this country from the United States where the Johnson presidency had earlier rejected assimilationist ideas in favour of a 'melting pot' ideology. The central objective of the 'melting pot' integrationist policy in Australia was to encourage the creation of a society in which different cultural groups, including Anglo-Celtics, participated and contributed *fully and equally* in the development of the nation's social, political and economic institutions. The rhetoric of integration suggested a view of inter-cultural relations in which all groups lived with each other in a climate of mutual accommodation. The most fundamental problem with this position was, however, that equal participation in a society in which its political structures and institutions were essentially derived from Anglo-Celtic traditions could hardly have been possible. It was recognised that the dice, so to speak, with which the 'melting pot' game was played was already loaded in favour of existing power structures. In the end, integration, while representing a shift in policy away from the emphasis on Anglo-conformity in cultural terms, remained assimilationist, for it required from migrants their complete political integration into a predominantly Anglo-Celtic system.

Integration, in no less a subtle way than assimilation, emphasised the liberal ideal of a homogeneous Australian community. The need to develop a culturally and politically indivisible nation continued to be stressed. The assumption was that the Australian community had to have a single uniform culture. It is this assumption that has been challenged by those who see in the notion of ethnicity a central focus for a more satisfactory social and political analysis, an analysis which leads them to advocate multiculturalism. The policy of multiculturalism rejects the idea of cultural homogeneity as either possible or, indeed, desirable. It is argued by the proponents of multiculturalism that ethnicity is a natural phenomenon of human society; and that therefore policies promoting cultural homogeneity cannot succeed even in modern industrial societies which are characterised by their preference for large and uniform institutions. Indeed the need for cultural identification in such societies is even greater than in traditional societies. Ethnicity is thus thought to be a permanent feature of human society. But what is ethnicity? In the next section, I turn to discuss three prominent theories that can be found in sociological literature.

Van den Berghe's primordialism

Van den Berghe (1981) develops his description of the ethnic phenomenon on the basis of his rejection of both the assimilationist ideology and what he refers to as the liberal tradition in race and ethnic relations. According to van den Berghe, this liberal tradition in ethnic and race relations is constituted by the following propositions:

> 1. All humans are members of a single species, and there are no biologically meaningful subspecies within it. 'Races' are social constructs corresponding to no biological reality.
> 2. Differences *between* human populations are smaller than *within* them, and such differences as exist (e.g. in I.Q. test performance) are largely if not entirely the product of the social environment.
> 3. Racism and ethnocentrocism are irrational, dysfunctional attitudes, if not downright aberrations, to which certain rigid, authoritarian types of personality are especially prone. Such attitudes must be combatted through a social therapy promoting equal status contact between groups.
>
> (van den Berghe 1981, pp. 2–3)

Van den Berghe argues that the liberal tradition in social science rests on the mistaken assumption that all human behaviour can be explained entirely in terms of the cultural environment. Impressed by the recent attempts of Wilson (1975) and others to integrate the biological and the social sciences into a single evolutionary paradigm, van den Berghe suggests that in studying human behaviour we should look at 'the genetic evolution of man, as one species of organism interacting with many others in a physical and biotic milieu *as well as* in the cultural environment of his own making' (van den Berghe 1981, p. 3).

Using this socio-biological paradigm, van den Berghe contends that assimilationist and melting-pot ideologies are fundamentally misguided because they rest on the assumption that cultural diversity can be eradicated through the forces of urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation. Cultural diversity is, for van den Berghe, a necessary condition of human evolution and adaptation. He maintains that like all other animals, human genes are selected in an adaptive response to a multiplicity of ecological conditions. Our natural selection grows out of our specifically human capabilities, the configuration of which we call culture. Van den Berghe insists that culture is part and parcel of nature and cannot be dissociated from it. He goes on to argue that

> Like other animal societies, human societies are held together by the self-interest of their individual members. This self-interest is best measured in terms of reproductive success, for it is through differential reproduction that biological evolution of all life forms takes place. Individuals, human or nonhuman, interact competitively or cooperatively to maximise their individual fitness. They do so in three basic ways: through kin selection, reciprocity and coercion. The human variations on these three basic mechanisms are much more complex than those observable in other species, but they are not *categorically* different.
>
> (van den Berghe 1981, p. 11)

On the basis of this view of human behaviour, ethnicity, according to van den Berghe, has something to do with kinship, a deeply-rooted biological affiliation, which is often referred to in the social science literature as primordialist. According to van den Berghe, it is this kinship and biological affiliation that brings people together to acquire common cultural attributes like language, religion, rituals and other customs, and that these are constitutive of ethnicity.

Humans, like other social animals, claims van den Berghe (1981, p. 35), are biologically predisposed to be nepotistic because, by favouring kin, they maximise their 'inclusive fitness'. This notion gives rise to the ideas of physical boundaries of territory and social boundaries, violations of which explain mistrust, avoidance and, not infrequently, open conflict over scarce resources. Van den Berghe argues that even in the industrialised mass societies of today, the urge to maintain collectivities and social boundaries on the basis of biological descent remains strong. He contends that a 'wide variety of ethnic markers are used to define such collectivities of descent, but their choice is not capricious' (van den Berghe 1981, p. 35). Van den Berghe thus insists that ethnicity has not been 'revived' in recent years—rather it has always existed, for its existence is an objective matter, governed by biological laws. According to van den Berghe, while ethnicity may be something variable, situationally defined or subjectively expressed, it nevertheless has a natural foundation in the biological makeup of human beings. Nepotism and ethnocentrisim, however expressed, are therefore 'biologically evolved mechanisms serving the pursuit of individual self-interest' (van den Berghe 1981, p. xii).

There are a number of criticisms that can be made of van den Berghe's account of ethnicity. I shall restrict myself to mentioning just four. The first criticism relates to the inadequacies of the theoretical framework which van den Berghe assumes. The epistemological status of socio-biology is, at best, dubious. Socio-biology claims to be science but its claims are essentially unfalsifiable. And, if we accept Popper's (1972) view that science is demarcated from non-science on the grounds that scientific propositions are falsifiable and non-scientific propositions are not, then sociobiology turns out to be a explanatory scheme which cannot be empirically refuted. As Burnley et al. (1985, p. 26) point out, 'we cannot disprove that lurking deep in the human bio-gram is the imperative of inclusive fitness. Equally, though, van den Berghe cannot show that it is, except circumstantially because it might work out that way and some people say they believe it'. For every example that may be provided to support the contentions of biologically grounded ethnic behaviour, there are equally good counter-examples.

The claim of van den Berghe that ethnicity is an innate human characteristic which manifests itself differently in different cultural contexts would also appear to be lacking any explanatory significance. Unless we know exactly how gene sharing and the like occurs in conflict over scarce resources (van den Berghe 1981, p. 38) we cannot explain specific instances of ethnic competition in terms of sociobiological factors. Van den Berghe provides an elaborate taxonomy of the stages of ethnic relations (pp. 40 ff.). Such a scheme suggests a theory of social stratification which is not examined in any great detail by van den Berghe. But, as Burnley et al. (1985, p. 25) argue, van den Berghe's argument can be applied equally to other classificatory schemes in respect of social differentiation, such as caste. For the biological processes which van den Berghe describes 'are similar because they serve human populations to distinguish one from the other, either on a micro or macro level' (Burnley et al. 1985, p. 25). Clearly van den Berghe has not identified the distinctive features which might be constitutive of ethnicity.

Having stated so boldly that nepotism, ethnocentrism, self-interest and kin identification are innate human characteristics, van den Berghe is careful to assert that his is a scientific theory, rather than one which is concerned with making value-judgements on the characteristics he finds universal in all human behaviour. He claims (van den Berghe 1981, p. xii) that his description amounts to a 'statement that the behavior of most people most of the time is consistent with that paradigm, whether one likes it or not'. Van den Berghe's account evidently rests on the assumption that it is possible to distinguish facts from values. This is a highly questionable assumption. Most post-empiricist philosophers of social science (see Bernstein 1976) now admit that not only are descriptions of social phenomena necessarily informed by categories of evaluation and appraisal, but also that sociological descriptions have ideological implications. Concepts such as ethnicity cannot be regarded as purely 'scientific' constructs; every sociological concept and theory has an ideological force by reason of its influence upon the actions of human beings in their everyday life. As Bottomore (1966, p. 20) points out

> it may have this influence either because it is impregnated with a social doctrine, or because, while it excludes any immediate doctrinal influence, it nevertheless draws attention to and emphasizes certain features of social life and neglects others, and thus persuades men to conceive of their condition and their possible future in one set of terms rather than another.

By describing human behaviour as *biologically* nepotistic and ethnocentric, van den Berghe rules out any possibility of political action through which nepotism and ethnocentricity might be overcome. This would certainly be an unacceptable political implication of van den Berghe's sociological account.

On his socio-biological account, van den Berghe assumes inequality to be a permanent and universal feature of the human condition. It is this assumption that leads him to argue that social and cultural hierarchies are inevitable in human society (van den Berghe 1981, p. 38). The ideological implications of this claim are immense. Ethnic inequalities and social stratification now appear as natural, 'biologically given' phenomena over which humans have no power. But if ethnocentricity and ethnic nepotism are, at their foundation, biological, then there seems little point in spending millions of dollars of public money in an attempt to reduce, through educational programs, levels of prejudice that currently exist in a pluralist society!

Van den Berghe's biological determinism can be challenged, however. What human beings can and cannot do may be governed, at a very general level, by our biological makeup, but this does not mean that how social groups relate to each other is also determined by biological laws. I would want to maintain that *social* behaviour is produced and reproduced by human beings and may therefore be radically transformed. Moreover, our social relations should be viewed not so much as biologically defined but as conceptualised and maintained *by us* within historical and structural conditions in which we find ourselves. The fact is that inequality is a social relation between individuals or groups of people and like all other social relations can be transformed. And as Midgley (1979) has pointed out the possibility of altruism is as strong among human beings, as is the possibility of nepotism and self-interest.

Barth's interpretive account of ethnicity

One of the most influential critiques of the primordial conception of ethnicity, as represented by the work of van den Berghe, can be found in Barth's introductory essay to his *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969). Barth emphatically rejects the views that ethnic groups have a primordial quality, that is, the characteristic of being *biologically* self-perpetuating, and that they share fundamental cultural values, realised in overt unity in various cultural forms. His main objection to the primordial view is that it begs all the critical questions concerning the place of ethnicity in human society and culture; for, 'while purporting to give an ideal type model of a recurring empirical form, it implies a preconceived view of what are the significant factors in the genesis, structure and function of such groups' (Barth 1969, p. 11). Barth argues that the primordial view also allows us to assume that ethnic boundary maintenance is unproblematic and that it occurs in relative cultural and social isolation, 'mainly in response to local ecologic factors, through a history of adaptation by invention and selective borrowing' (Barth 1969, p. 11).

In Barth's view, what is missing from the primordial view of ethnicity is any account of how individuals come together to see each other as sharing a common culture, and others as having a distinctively different culture. Barth accepts the view that the classification of persons and local groups as members of an ethnic group depends on their exhibiting the traits of a particular culture. But he denies the assumption that this is something that can only be 'judged objectively by the ethnographic observer, in the culture-area tradition, regardless of the categories and prejudices of the actors' (Barth 1969, p. 12). For Barth, what is of crucial importance is the subjective interpretive dimension of ethnic classification.

Barth sees an ethnic group as a form of self-identified social organisation, with a membership which not only identifies itself but is also identified by others as constituting a cultural category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. According to Barth, his definition enables ethnicity to be seen as involving a dynamic relationship, for actors use ethnic identities to categorise themselves and others for purposes of social interaction. Barth maintains that:

> It is important to recognize that although ethnic categories take cultural differences into account, we can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective' differences, *but*

> *only those which the actors themselves regard as significant.* Not only do ecologic variations mark and exaggerate differences; some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied.
> (Barth 1969, p. 14, italics mine)

So, in contrast to van den Berghe's analysis, Barth is concerned with the social processes by which groups identify themselves *and* maintain their difference from other groups. Barth explains these processes by reference to his concept of boundary maintenance. He argues that it is the

> ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses. The boundaries to which we must give attention are of course social boundaries, though they may have territorial counterparts. If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion.
> (Barth 1969, p. 15)

Boundaries between ethnic groups are thus self-ascribed and represent the collective act of a group of people to recognise and maintain in their interaction with other groups their distinctiveness in terms of various cultural criteria, such as emotional, symbolic and linguistic. This definition, of course, presupposes not only an awareness but also a degree of contact and interaction between ethnic groups. Ethnicity is therefore understood to be a *reactive* concept. If we accept Barth's analysis of ethnicity, then research into ethnic relations must begin with people's perception of a sense of difference in relation to others who are perceived to be 'not us'. The analytical focus thus shifts from an attempt to identify some allegedly 'objective' cultural traits to an investigation of the social boundaries that are drawn on the basis of the recognition and maintenance of cultural differences.

Barth's analysis of ethnicity is certainly an advance on van den Berghe's socio-biological account. Barth's view of ethnicity represents a rejection of van den Berghe's static primordial classification of cultural traditions and traits. The theorists, writing in the tradition of Barth's work, correctly stress that ethnicity is reactive: an allegedly objective basis of differentiation between groups is rightly rejected in favour of a view which emphasises a 'subjective component' in the criteria used in the process of categorisation. As Wallman (1979, p. 3) points out, the ascription of ethnicity is the recognition of '*significant* difference', and that the normative basis for what counts as significant, or the difference, is neither set absolutely nor defined by reference to some supposedly objective set of properties. Wallman (1979, p. 6) contends that ethnicity is 'culture in-adaptation-to, in-response-to, up-against "others" within a context shared by both sides of the ethnic boundary, and it is shaped by the aims, constraints and opportunities of that context as they pertain to each side'. Wallman argues, moreover, that no *a priori* assumptions can be made about what cultural and phenotypical criteria will be used in the process of ascribing ethnicity. For example, two persons who possess similar phenotypical and cultural features and are engaged in social interaction, may not necessarily attribute any social significance to this similarity. They would not therefore share any ethnic identity.

Now while the interpretivist approach of Barth and his followers might seem promising, it has a number of very serious flaws. To begin with, Barth's, and particularly Wallman's, definitions of ethnicity are far too general to be analytically useful. By using ethnicity to refer generally to the perception of group difference, the term is being made to refer to any criteria by which one might distinguish one group from another. Barth's definition would allow us to describe any group which defines itself as being different in some way from some other group, and as sharing some identity, as constituting an ethnic group. On this view, liberal voters, country women, Rotarians and the like can all describe themselves as belonging to some ethnic group. If, however, we insist that an ethnic group is a culturally distinct minority with some specific attributes then we have isolated a criterion which is not *self*-ascribed. This would clearly be contradictory to Barth's insistence that ethnicity be subjectively defined.

Barth and Wallman are correct in emphasising the importance of the subjective dimension in the recognition of ethnicity, but the scope of their analysis is limited by its predominant focus on interpretive perspectives of individual actors. They provide no theoretical scheme which might account for the subjective meanings that individuals might have of their ethnicity. It is true that human behaviour must initially be understood in terms of the meaning and significance that that behaviour has for the individual. But this understanding is necessarily limited, for to stop at this juncture is to fail to ask further questions about the origins, causes and results of people accepting certain interpretations of their behaviour and social life as being valid. It is also to neglect problems of social conflict and social change that arise when we attempt to understand the significance of our social classifications. Interpretivist accounts, such as provided by Barth and Wallman, are generally incapable of explaining the macro social, political and cultural structures within which self-ascription of ethnicity makes sense. Discussing the tradition of interpretive social science, Carr & Kemmis (1983, pp. 94–5) correctly observe that:

> Because it emphasises the 'subjective meanings' of social action and the way in which social reality is constructed out of a plurality of 'definitions of the situations', the interpretive approach cannot help but neglect questions about the relationships between individuals' interpretations and actions and external factors and circumstances. But while it may be true that social reality is constructed and maintained through the interactions of individuals, it is also the case that the range of possible interpretations of reality that are open to individuals is limited and constrained by the structural elements of a particular social order. Social reality is not simply something that is structured and sustained by the interpretations and perceptions of individuals—it is also a major factor in determining the kind of interpretations of reality that are appropriate for a particular group of individuals to possess.

Carr & Kemmis (1983, p. 96) go on to argue that the interpretivist approach is further mistaken, because in emphasising the fundamental importance of grasping the subjective meanings that individuals have of their own ways of viewing the social world, it 'offers no way of identifying and examining the ideological character that these meanings and actions possess, and the purposes they serve in social life'. The interpretivist view provides us with no criteria for distinguishing those ways of looking at social phenomena which are systematically distorted and those which are not; genuine insights and illusions, rationalisations and deceptions are placed on the same plane, as having equal validity.

The place ethnicity has, and how it is related to and located within economic and political circumstances of a plural society like Australia are highly complex questions. The issue of how ethnicity is linked to the questions of material and political inequalities and the questions of class structure in Australia is no less problematic. But the crucial point here is that an analysis of ethnicity, and the process of social categorisation, which is based solely on the interpretative understanding of actors themselves, is unlikely to be theoretically useful. Nor are these self-understandings, unrelated as they often are to broader structural questions, provide sufficient basis for critical judgements or evaluation of policies which highlight ethnic differentiation.

A good example of the limitations of the interpretativist approach to an analysis of ethnicity can be found in the work of Isaacs (1976). Using ethnographic techniques, Isaacs studied a number of Sydney schools with large numbers of Greek immigrants. Her book, *Greek Children in Sydney*, is an interesting catalogue of the Anglo-Australian attitudes towards Greek migrants and the attempts of Greek-Australians to understand their ethnicity. An impression that is conveyed by Isaacs's account is that, as an ethnic group, Greek-Australians are generally uncertain about their ethnicity and they lack any continuous, conscious sense of identity as a common collectivity. This should surprise no one, for there are such profound differences among Greek-Australians along class, occupational, religious and regional lines (and also how they view their life in Australia) that to speak of a homogeneous Greek ethnicity is totally inappropriate. Furthermore, Isaacs's attempt at developing primary categories of explanation by reference to individuals' own interpretations means that she ignores the underlying historical and structural processes within which such interpretations are located. Arguably, these processes set the parameters which are instrumental in defining class boundaries as well as ethnic divisions, often created to serve particular state functions. Since a recognition of these parameters, as they manifest themselves in Australia, is not necessarily evident in individuals' own understanding of their social behaviour, Isaacs's analysis of Greek ethnicity is essentially flawed.

Glazer & Moynihan's view of ethnicity

Both van den Berghe and Barth either ignore class issues or else present their accounts of ethnicity in opposition to class analysis. For Barth and the interpretivists generally the primary object of analysis is self-ascribed cultural differentiation of ethnic groups. Ethnic beliefs and behaviour are assessed in terms of their cultural distinctiveness, but the issue of how such beliefs and behaviour may be linked to class relations, and located in economic and political structures, is not explored. Indeed, as de Lepervanche (1980, p. 28) points out, 'The vast bulk of the material on ethnicity is exceptionally empirical in emphasis and, implicitly or explicitly, critical of class analysis.' Even when Barth mentions systems of stratification and power, he refers to these phenomena as being conceptually linked to values and culture, rather than to unequal social and economic relationships. The functionalist assumptions in his account become evident when he claims that 'stratified poly-ethnic systems exist where groups are characterized by differential control of assets that are valued by all groups in the system' (Barth 1969, p. 27). In Barth's analysis, moreover, it is implicitly assumed that inequalities are natural and necessary means of ethnic differentiation, a mechanism which is seen as *the* organising principle of modern social life.

In contrast to Barth's analysis, van den Berghe's account represents not so much an obscuration of class issues as an assertion that class and ethnic analysis of social relations are logically independent of each other. Van den Berghe, quoted by de Lepervanche (1980), warns that 'Any attempt to reduce class to ethnicity or ethnicity to class results is a serious distortion of reality' and claims that any '*a priori* theoretical position that one is more important than the other is untenable' (p. 30). According to van den Berghe, while social classes are grouped according to common material interests, ethnic groups are organised by real or positive common descent—ultimately, on the basis of common genetic interests. Van den Berghe thus assumes that biologically grounded cultural interests are logically distinguishable from those interests which are social and political. This is a fundamental assumption which permeates almost all recent analyses of ethnicity. It is an assumption upon which the current official theory of multiculturalism in Australia, a theory which celebrates cultural diversity and yet requires political integration of migrants into existing structures, is based. I will argue later in this monograph that such a sharp distinction between the cultural and the political is untenable. But before I do this, I want to briefly examine a highly influential argument of Glazer & Moynihan (1975) who see in ethnicity the emergence of a social category which supersedes class.

Glazer & Moynihan argue that, just as class was an idea which helped people conceptualise their social and political identity in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century it is ethnicity which is the organising principle around which people define their identity. As a political idea, Glazer & Moynihan (1975, p. 20) claim, 'ethnicity in our time has spread round the world with the curious consequence of sameness and difference that is encountered with other such phenomena'. No longer, they contend, is class normally the basis of group mobilisation; rather, it is ethnicity which has come to have strategic efficacy as a basis for asserting claims and negotiating with governments. In the past, it was through an indentification with a particular class that groups expressed not only their interest but also their conflicts. But, argue Glazer & Moynihan, one element of the present situation is that

> *interest* is pursued effectively by *ethnic groups* today as well as *interest*-defined groups; indeed, perhaps it can be pursued even more effectively. As against class-based forms of social identification and conflict—which of course continue to exist—we have been surprised by the persistence and salience of ethnic-based forms of social identification and conflict.
>
> (Glazer & Moynihan 1975, p. 7)

According to Glazer & Moynihan (1975), an ethnic group is recognised in terms of its having a distinct set of interests and needs which require collective organisation in order that they be pursued and defended. Ethnicity, then, comes to have a political dimension. But as a social, and explanatory, category, it is quite distinct from class. Glazer & Moynihan claim that class analysis is not capable of explaining the kind of conflict that now exists between migrant groups and the dominant majority group in modern industrial societies. Not all interests are determined by economic position, and increasingly in the modern world interests that guide people into social action derive their significance from specific *ethnic* attachment.

Glazer & Moynihan (1975, p. 19) suggest that an important reason for the pervasive salience of ethnicity and its effectiveness in advancing the interests of particular groups is that 'it involves *more* than interests'. Quoting Bell (1975), they argue: ' "Ethnicity has become more salient [than class] because it can combine an interest with an affective tie" (p. 169). While, on the other hand, in the case of class, "What had once been an *ideology* had now become almost largely an *interest*" (p. 167, italics added)' (Glazer & Moynihan 1975, p. 19).

This is a highly dubious argument, as Eipper (1983) has clearly demonstrated. Eipper (1983, p. 433) correctly points out that class is no less capable than ethnicity of combining an interest with an affective tie: 'again and again historiography shows us that class consciousness and class solidarity acquires its political potency from the way economic interest is expressed in and through affective cultural ties'. Indeed, it could reasonably be argued, as Bonacich (1980) does, that it is the underlying class conflict that has given rise to the assertion of ethnicity as a possible avenue for class transformation. Glazer & Moynihan (1975, p. 25) themselves admit that ethnic self-assertion and conflict is 'simply the *form* that class conflict has been taking on certain occasions in recent decades, and without the motor of class exploitation nothing else would follow'. But they do not recognise the full implications of this observation: for if a revival of ethnicity is *an expression* of class struggle then ethnicity cannot be a theoretically fundamental property.

I believe Eipper (1983) is correct in pointing out that the conceptual difficulties Glazer & Moynihan lead themselves into are largely due to their adherence to a very narrow economistic conception of class. They see class as a stratificational hierarchy, as an economic category which coheres with a set of interests. But if we see class as a broader notion, in the way Marx (1906) and even Weber (1948) meant it to be seen, as involving the whole spectrum of ideological, social and economic relationships, then ethnicity as a category would have to be accounted for in terms of these relationships, rather than the other way around.

For Glazer & Moynihan inequality between ethnic groups in plural societies is inevitable. They assert its universality by maintaining that just as human beings are not equal, ethnic groups are also unequal. Plural societies are, moreover, constantly in a state of negotiating, both formally and informally, consensus between contending interests and between conflicting or antagonistic values and beliefs. Inequality prevails because through these negotiations different sets of values, beliefs and interests come to acquire higher or lower status. Glazer & Moynihan (1975, p. 14) argue that, 'In a situation of mixed ethnic groups where one group is dominant, which is to say that its norms are seen as normal not just for it but for others also, there follows an almost automatic consignment of other groups to inferior status'. Racial discrimination is thus, 'the relationship between two groups of people, wherein *one group has defined the rules by which the other group must act*'.

Now the main problem with this account of inter-ethnic relations and competition is that it is presented in a totally ahistorical manner. That is, no attempt is made to describe the historical and structural conditions which promote inter-ethnic competition in the first place; nor is there any account provided of the hegemonic mechanisms by which those who constitute the dominant group continue to arrive at 'consensus' that is invariably advantageous to them. Glazer & Moynihan are also mistaken in assuming that ethnic groups have uniform values and interests. As was argued earlier, the essential interests of people are often determined on the basis of their location in class structure, rather than their cultural identity. In so far as migrants, who are more commonly referred to as 'ethnics' than is the dominant group, are motivated in their migration by a desire for economic and social advancement, they are acutely cognisant of their class position (Piore 1979).

Glazer & Moynihan, because they abstract ethnic differentiation, and the notion of group identity which derives from this difference, from production relations, fail to identify class dimensions *within* the culturally distinct ethnic groups. While it may be true that a Greek clothing factory owner may share with his employees his language, diet and faith in Greek Orthodoxy, the differences between them are still profound. This sharing of a common ethnicity tells us nothing about the conditions under which the production of clothes proceeds and therefore about the factors concerning the purchase and sale of the labour of the fellow 'ethnics'. We therefore know nothing about the material and structural basis upon which the owner of the factory is able to maintain his ownership, and therefore his class position. In terms of this description of economic relations among the people belonging to the same ethnic group, we cannot assume that they will have identical interests in the manner that Glazer & Moynihan suggest.

While van den Berghe, Barth and Glazer & Moynihan locate their analysis of the ethnic phenomenon in very different sociological traditions, and while they have radically different theoretical interests, their analyses are nevertheless based on a set of common assumptions. In this section I will argue that in Australia it has been these assumptions which have served to promote and legitimise the ideological appeal of multiculturalism.

Van den Berghe's account of ethnicity is based on his assumption that ethnicity is biologically primordial and that it constitutes a foundational category for the purposes of explanation of human behaviour. This assumption is partly shared by Barth who, while rejecting van den Berghe's emphasis on ethnicity as an objective category, nevertheless claims that people do come to classify themselves into various ethnic categories on the basis of their distinctively different cultures. How cultural differences originate and come to acquire significance in a particular society is an issue that neither van den Berghe nor Barth explore. In contrast, Glazer & Moynihan see ethnicity as a socio-politically mobilising concept, through which common social and political interests are expressed. The term 'ethnic groups' is used by Moynihan and Glazer to refer 'to any group of distinct cultural tradition and origin' (Glazer & Moynihan 1975, p. 4). Why certain cultural differences acquire significance at a particular time in particular ways, and not others, is an issue left unexplored by Glazer & Moynihan.

All three accounts assume cultural traditions to be static unchanging phenomena, divorced from the broader social context in which they acquire meaning. In each case, because ethnicity is accepted as key explanatory concept, questions of the dynamics of cultural change are either pushed aside as being irrelevant or else ignored. In short, culture is *reified*. Reification occurs whenever culture is treated as though it is a thing unto itself, independent of other spheres of life. The reification of ethnic values has made a mystique of ethnicity, creating the impression that there is something foundational (natural) about ethnic phenomena that does not lend itself to rational explanation. This is particularly the case when ethnic groups are assumed to be endowed with a given set of cultural values which are taken to be unrelated to the material and political context in which they arise and acquire significance.

The accounts of van den Berghe, Barth and Glazer & Moynihan assume that the cultural form and the content of ethnicity is entirely separable from its social and political origins. There is no exploration of how social forces influence assertion of ethnicity and how there might be a dialectical relationship between ethnic factors on the one hand, and a broad array of historical, economic, political and social factors on the other. The failure and the reluctance to tackle these questions leads not only to the reification but also to the mystification of ethnicity. As in other western countries, in Australia the celebration of ethnicity in such a manner has come to serve an ideological function.

Jakubowicz (1984, p. 15) points out that in much of the literature on the subject in Australia, 'a theoretical primacy is accorded to "ethnicity", however ill-defined the term may be, and however idealised and ahistorical is the referent'. Ethnicity has taken on 'a first cause' role in such a way as not to require an explanation of its form and origin in terms of relationships with such concepts as class. Jakubowicz shows how this abstract way of looking at ethnicity has permeated the work of such influential sociologists of ethnic relations as Price, Zubrzycki and Martin. A reified view of ethnicity is also characteristically the one assumed in the most influential government reports on multiculturalism to have been published over the past decade. Multiculturalism has been represented as the celebration of ethnic diversity. But the ethnicity that is encouraged is *apolitical* ethnicity, divorced from the larger, socio-political matrix in which it is embedded.

This apolitical view of ethnicity is encouraged not only in Australia but also in the United States, where, as Glazer & Moynihan admit, U.S. governments have found ethnicity efficacious and have employed 'ethnic categories as a basis for distributing its rewards' (Glazer & Moynihan 1975, p. 10). But why have governments done this? In responding to this question, Eipper (1983, p. 435) argues that:

> Glazer and Moynihan do in theory what governments do in practice: they deny that ethnicity can be decomposed into linguistic, national, religious, tribal, racial, etc., divisions, at the same time using ethnicity to decompose class: it becomes a device for buying-off groups, a devise for mitigating the polarising effects of class. It does so because vertical links and dependencies are created by making the criteria of eligibility and the channels for receiving state-patronage ones based—if not legally, then certainly substantively—upon cultural statuses.

The Australian state has been no less keen than the United States to promote ethnicity, and in doing so to mask and obscure underlying class issues. No other social movement in recent Australian history has had the same kind of party-political bipartisan support as the promotion of multiculturalism. In the following section, I discuss the role of the Australian state in the celebration of ethnicity as the central focus of its policy of multiculturalism.

The role of the state

Australia's population in 1947 was 7.6 million. Of this, less than ten per cent had been born overseas and over ninety per cent were Anglo-Celtic in background (Price 1983). By the mid-1980s the picture has changed drastically, to the extent that now nearly a quarter of all Australians were born overseas, and only seventy per cent have an Anglo-Celtic lineage. The influx of non-English-speaking European immigrants and, more recently, Asians, has visibly transformed the cultural landscape of the country. Throughout the post-Second World War period successive governments, in response to the demands of capital for more labour, have attempted to recruit migrants in various ways so that the rate of Australia's industrial growth can be maintained.

It is important to remember that migration is an economic process. It is the movement of labour to places where the capital has come to be located. In capitalist countries the movement of labour is managed by the state on behalf of capital. The state, as O'Connor (1981) has pointed out, plays a crucial role in facilitating capital accumulation by structuring its policies in such a way as to provide conditions conducive to accumulation. In terms of the political economy of migration then, the state regulates the movement of labour with varying degrees of rigidity, often making invidious judgments about the appropriateness of people of particular origins for particular jobs. Porter (1975, pp. 290–1) points out that this selective process, by which people are sorted out according to various criteria that are linked to patterns of economic activity, is a phenomenon that has characterised the immigration policies of all capitalist countries. The state's role in the migration process does not cease at making judgments about the criterion of selection. The state has a crucial function in creating the social conditions in which migrants and their families can live and work, so that the host country can secure the fullest economic advantages of migration. What is clear, then, is that migration is necessarily linked to the processes of capital accumulation, and that in their new country migrants live and define their identity in a context which cannot be seen as divorced from the prevailing political and economic conditions.

Migrants who have come to Australia have not only been seen as different because of their distinctive culture but have also been allocated a particular place within the class structure of this society. Collins (1978) argues that post-war migration has served the function of reinforcing class divisions within Australia, for migrants have been recruited into jobs which are typically unskilled and at the bottom of the occupational structure. In many cases, as Birrell & Birrell (1981) have observed, migrants have accepted jobs which Anglo–Celtic–Australians, despite current high trends of unemployment, have been reluctant to accept. The available statistics clearly illustrate how most migrants begin their life in Australia with low-paid, low-status and insecure jobs, often in manufacturing industries where the conditions are generally noisy, dirty and often fitted with dangerous, out-dated machinery. This confirms the suggestion that capital investment in industries which employ large numbers of migrants is often kept to a minimum. Available statistics also make clear that, on the whole, there is only a limited class mobility amongst migrants from Eastern and Southern Europe (Western 1983, ch. 5). Summing up what he sees as the fundamental point about the relationship between immigration and economic processes in Australia, Collins (1975, p. 125) has concluded that:

> Immigration has been of vital importance to Australian post-war capitalism. In the most obvious sense, it has provided an industrial reserve army of workers, alleviating labour shortages that have restricted Australian capitalism almost continuously since settlement. More importantly, by providing an easily directed, mobile workforce to accept jobs for wages and conditions that Australian indigenous workers would reject, it has been crucial for capital accumulation and growth. It is the immigrant workers who have been placed at the bottom of the labour market, become the 'factory fodder' for local and imported capital, and are used as a 'buffer' reserve army to minimise social and economic instability.
>
> (Collins 1975, p. 125)

Migrants, then, occupy a particular class position in Australian society and their subjective ethnic identification cannot be divorced from this fact, as the likes of Barth would have us do. The culture that they bring with

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them upon migration does not remain static: it changes as a result of the dialectical interplay between that culture and the migrants' experiences of the structural features of Australian society. All human beings constantly modify their social consciousness and, in view of the perceptions they have of their social and political context, make revisions about the way they feel about their identity and their culture. The assumption that a basic distinction between the cultural and the political is possible is, then, fundamentally flawed and any attempt by the state to insist upon such a divorce in policy development is motivated by ideology rather than fact.

The policy of assimilation which the Australian government pursued until the late sixties was unambigious in its contention that migrants had to be absorbed into the existing Australian society, both politically and culturally. Assimilation was assumed to be both possible and essential if Australia were to be a united nation, politically and culturally indivisible. Martin (1978, p. 38) points out that the assumption about the assimilability of all migrants was not restricted to policy makers. Most Australians at the time thought that, in order to become an Australian, migrants should shed their cultural traditions and acquire an 'Australian identity'. In this way Anglo-Celtic-Australian hegemony was to be preserved. The education system had an important role to play in helping migrants assimilate. It was thought that, through a process of osmosis at schools, migrant children would be absorbed into a homogeneous Australian culture, and that they would eventually be able to participate in Australian political life, in much the same manner as anyone else.

However, by the end of the 1960s it was clear that the policy of assimilation was simply not working. Non-English-speaking migrants were neither willing to nor able to discard their language, culture or identity (Bullivant 1981). There was thus a widespread challenge to the assumption of assimilability. Furthermore, a wide variety of public figures declared that assimilation was a morally reprehensible policy, for it required cultural changes on an arbitrary basis, from one group of people and not another; it denied migrants the moral right to retain their culture and language (Grassby 1973). These public doubts about assimilation were accompanied by a growing realisation amongst migrants of their exclusion from the political processes of this country. There was also a recognition by migrants of the extent to which they were economically disadvantaged in comparison to Anglo-Celtic-Australians. Assimilation had meant that the existing political and economic structures had invariably favoured the Anglo-Celtic-Australians. During the late sixties migrant groups, who had in effect occupied an under-class status in Australian society, began to see the contradictions in the policy of assimilation. What is more, they were now more politically confident to express their dissatisfaction.

The state was not slow in noticing this dissatisfaction with its policy of assimilation. It clearly perceived increased tendencies towards migrant militancy. Significantly, the strike at Ford's Broadmeadow plant in 1973 demonstrated the volatility of immigrant workers (Connell 1977). With the possibility of heightened tensions among migrant workers, the state foresaw the possibility of a disruption of the social conditions necessary for the accumulation of capital (see Rizvi 1985, p. 15). Something had to be done to contain what amounted to a legitimation crisis (O'Connor 1981). From the state's point of view there was clearly a need to arrest further migrant discontent. The state had to devise a policy in relation to migrant welfare that had the effect of diffusing conflict, while at the same time reproducing social structures necessary for capital accumulation. Multiculturalism can be viewed as the state's response to this legitimation crisis. It can be seen as a policy which was devised to contain migrant militancy and to restore their allegiance to the existing system.

While assimilation was a policy which saw political and cultural aspects of migrant lives as inseparable, multiculturalism represents an assertion of a fundamental distinction between the two. Multiculturalism invites migrants to celebrate their 'ethnic' diversity, but equally importantly, it requires them to continue to adhere to the existing economic and political structures of Australian society. It is in the formulation of the policy of multiculturalism that the notion of ethnicity, as articulated by such theorists as van den Berghe, Barth and Glazer & Moynihan, has been useful to the state. The theoretical notion of ethnicity, viewed ahistorically and apolitically, in effect is used by the state to legitimise its attempt at making a sharp distinction between cultural and political concerns. Ethnicity is viewed as a theoretically autonomous category with which to describe social behaviour without any reference to class relations and the manner in which they are produced and reproduced in Australian society. With the analytical focus on ethnicity, an attempt is made to diffuse issues of class conflict and political change.

No single public figure is more clearly linked to the development of multiculturalism than the Whitlam Labor government's first immigration minister, Al Grassby. Grassby was a tireless advocate of the political values of cultural pluralism and inter-ethnic tolerance, as well as of the need to have 'a unity in diversity' in Australian society. Jakubowicz (1984, pp. 19–20) sums up Grassby's position in the following way:

> Essentially Grassby was espousing a liberationist philosophy, demanding recognition of the contribution of migrants to the Australian mainstream, and asserting their 'Australianness' had equal validity. Grassby was attempting to confront the dominance, if not hegemony, of the Anglo-Celtic cultural tradition. His program for a 'Family of the Nation', while eschewing any class analysis, sought to construct an integrated Australian 'culture' based partly on pluralist survival and expansion of separate cultures. While failing to identify the experience of migrants in Australia as part of the new Australian 'culture', he did argue that every migrant culture had value, so that Australia would become or was already in the process of becoming a multi-cultural society around a shared core of basic democratic norms and values that were specifically Australian.

Themes associated with Grassby's view of multiculturalism to a large extent were taken up by the Fraser government when it came to power in late 1975. Even under Fraser, Grassby, in his new position as the Commissioner of Community Relations, continued to have a great deal of influence on the multicultural debate. In 1976 the Fraser government established the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, which was given the task of formulating in more precise terms the main principles of multiculturalism. In one of its first reports the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council listed social cohesion, cultural identity and equality of opportunity and access as the key principles essential for a multicultural society. Even in this early formulation of multiculturalism, the intention to separate cultural issues from political issues was clearly evident. The report explicitly rejected the idea that there was a necessary connection between multiculturalism and 'the way in which, or the degree to which, ethnic minorities have access to decision making and political power' (Australian Ethnic Affairs Council 1978, p. 6). Ethnicity was, moreover, regarded as being 'irrelevant to political access'.

Multiculturalism finally became official government policy in 1978, following the publication of the report of the Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services for Migrants (1978), *Migrant Services and Programs*, known widely as the Galbally Report. The ideological underpinnings of the recommendations of the Galbally Report parallelled the philosophical orientation of the report of the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (1977). The main principles upon which the Galbally Report rested its recommendations were:

> (a) all members of our society must have equal opportunity to realise their full potential and must have equal access to programs and services;
> (b) every person should be able to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage and should be encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures;
> (c) needs of migrants should, in general, be met by programs and services available to the whole community but special services and programs are necessary at present to ensure equality of access and provision;
> (d) services and programs should be designed and operated in full consulation with clients, and self-help should be encouraged as much as possible with a view to helping migrants become self-reliant quickly.
>
> (Galbally Report 1978, p. 4)

Like its predecessor, the Galbally Report emphasised the need to celebrate cultural diversity. Galbally argued that ethnic relations in Australia were 'at a crucial stage' and that unless tolerance of diverse traditions became common-place social tensions would inevitably follow. This problem-solving orientation of the Galbally Report illustrates clearly how it saw its task in terms of the need to diffuse political conflict. Also, like the report of the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, Galbally stressed the importance of social and political cohesion in Australia. But this emphasis on social cohesion masked a deeper political agenda. Cultural diversity was encouraged by Galbally, but only to the extent that the framework of existing political and economic structures was left intact. With such an emphasis on social cohesion the Galbally Report presented no challenge to the culturally stratified and economically inequitable social and political system in which migrants find themselves.

Lewins (1980) has rightly pointed out that the Galbally Report ignores two key dimensions of the reality of migrant experience in Australia. Firstly, it lacks a full understanding of why ethnic groups form, persist and maintain their ethnicity. And, secondly, it overlooks the question of power distribution in Australia, and thus does not come to grips with the role of conflict in Australian social life. By failing to address the political nature of ethnic relations, the Report is left with no other analytical tool than a romantic notion of ethnicity to explain migrant community life in Australia. Galbally's account of ethnicity, like other accounts we discussed earlier, is fundamentally flawed because it depoliticises migrant experience and presents ethnicity as a static category.

The Galbally Report singles out education as an institution fundamental to making Australia a truly multicultural society. Multiculturalism for Galbally is above all an *attitude*, which schools can help encourage in children 'by fostering the retention of the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups and promoting intercultural understanding' (Galbally Report 1978, pp. 11-12). However, an assumption upon which this principle is based is that multiculturalism is concerned simply with changing prejudiced attitudes. As Foster (1981, p. 364) has pointed out, for the Galbally committee 'multiculturalism is not a fact with social consequences, but simply an attitude to be encouraged'. A major difficulty with this assumption is that, while social and economic structures remain unchanged, it is unrealistic to presume that attitudes can change through learning about cultures alone. Nowhere does the Report confront the issue of structural changes that must accompany an educational policy designed to influence attitudes.

Multicultural education

An officially accepted view of multicultural education is perhaps most clearly articulated in the report of the Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs (1982), *Multiculturalism for All Australians*. The report, which I shall refer to as the Zubrzycki Report after is main author, insists that 'The means to achieve multiculturalism are to be found in two areas: public policy and community attitudes' (p. 13). In the area of public policy, it argues that multiculturalism must be based on support for a common core of institutions, rights and obligation and that the principle of a common national identity must be recognised. Social cohesion is thus regarded as a unifying political value around and within the framework of which diverse ethnic groups are encouraged to celebrate their cultural differences. It is in the area of the development of desirable community attitudes that multicultural education is thought to be of crucial importance. As Jeffcoate (1982, p. 7) argues, multicultural education is 'primarily affective, about attitudes, and only instrumentally cognitive'. The Zubrzycki Report (1982, p. 17) claims that multiculturalism is a 'way of looking at Australian society, and involves living together with an awareness of cultural diversity. We accept our differences and appreciate a variety of lifestyles rather than expect everyone to fit into a standardised pattern'.

Multicultural education, then, is largely a matter of developing appropriate attitudes of tolerance and intercultural understanding in all Australians. The Zubrzycki Report provides a whole range of arguments in support of this view of multicultural education. In instrumental terms, it is suggested that the 'Recognition of, together with assistance for maintaining, different identities result in greater self-confidence and self-esteem for individuals and their families' (p. 17). Ignorance, the Zubrzycki Report contends, 'breeds suspicion and intolerance', and 'multicultural education is one of the keys to achieving a society in which cultural differences are understood and appreciated' (p. 18). Zubrzycki's thinking rests on the assumption that maintaining and nurturing cultural and linguistic heritages within Australia would inevitably lead to greater communication between members of one cultural group and those of others. For Zubrzycki, the school system has an important role to play in ensuring that children develop a 'multicultural attitude'. It is argued that:

> The Australian school system, despite regional and sectional variations, plays a central role in a multicultural Australia. Through the curricula, it provides a common body of knowledge that forms part of what it means to have an Australian culture. It also provides an opportunity for shared experiences between children of different cultural backgrounds.
> (Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs 1982, p. 18)

The Zubrzycki Report argues that inter-cultural understanding, tolerance of and respect for cultural patterns other than one's own is a fundamental condition of all truly multicultural classrooms.

The Zubrzycki Report's general analysis of multicultural education has been largely shared by the federal and all state governments in Australia. Through the Schools Commission, the federal government has ensured that multiculturalism remains high on the agendas of the state governments and schools when they come to make decisions about their educational policy. Substantial funds have been made available to support initiatives in multicultural education. These initiatives can be broadly classified into five inter-related categories.

Firstly, education departments in all states have encouraged studies of ethnic cultures. Programs based on the comparative study of cultures have now become commonplace in schools. Through the study of ethnic cultures, argues Smolicz (1984), not only do migrant children come to value their ethnicity but also begin to understand and respect cultural heritages other than their own. In this way, ethnic studies as an area of curriculum is as relevant to the Anglo-Celtic-Australian children as it is to the migrants. Smolicz (1984, p. 130) argues that since ethnicity is always 'dormant', ethnic studies can help activate a migrant child's normative identification with his heritage. Smolicz maintains that 'Ethnic heritage, in its folkloric, religious and artistic aspects and customs, also serves to strengthen identity' (Smolicz 1984, pp. 133–4). Multicultural education is thus seen as a way of improving the migrant child's self-concept by ensuring that he does not think of his cultural traits as inferior, in some manner.

The second set of educational initiatives under the rubric of multicultural education have emphasised the need to have all school practices, curricular as well as administrative, reflect a multicultural attitude. This way of looking at multicultural education is summed up by an early report of the Schools Commission:

> the *multicultural reality* of Australia needs to be reflected in the school curricula—languages, social studies, history, literature, the arts and crafts—in staffing and in school organisation. While these changes are particularly important to undergird the self-esteem of migrant children they also have application for all Australian children growing up in a society which could

> be greatly enriched through a wider sharing in the variety of *cultural heritages* now present in it.
>
> (Schools Commission 1975, quoted in Bullivant 1984, p. 60)

Similarly the report of the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (1978, p. 12), discussed earlier, suggests that:

> Schools [should] be given incentives to develop ethnic studies programs and to infuse the curriculum in general with the reality of the pluralist nature of Australian society, with the object both of enhancing the self-esteem of students of ethnic origin and giving *all* children a more authentic view of the nature of the society than the present mono-cultural education provides. It is important to note the interdependence of these two processes: the sense of identity of ethnic children will be defensive and inward-looking unless other children accept the validity of ethnic cultures and identities.

A multicultural curriculum is thus seen as embodying an overall attitude to be developed in all children, as well as a value which must be embedded in all educational practices. As Lippman (1981, p. 24) argues:

> multiculturalism is a perspective which needs to infuse all parts of teacher education, in the selection of educational materials, in the examples chosen for illustration, and in the choice of resource personnel. It is not only applicable to social studies and other aspects of humanities teaching but applies equally to mathematics and science.

A third initiative in multicultural education has meant that the support structure for teaching English as a second language to migrant children, and adults alike, has been significantly strengthened. The Zubrzycki Report (1982, p. 19) affirms its support for English as the pre-eminent language of public affairs in Australia, and argues that inter-cultural understanding cannot occur unless English is established as the principal means of communication between members of different cultural groups. Without appropriate skills in English, it is argued, migrants cannot fully participate in Australian cultural life and are therefore denied equality of occupational and social opportunity.

A fourth initiative in multicultural education involves the promotion of the teaching of community languages and bilingualism. According to the Kaldor Report (Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, Committee on Multiracial Education 1981) the objectives of multicultural education would be more adequately met if community languages were taught in all Australian schools. The Zubrzycki Report (1982, p. 19) also argues that if 'language is the deepest manifestation of any culture and enables the expression of features unique to that culture, the preservation of cultural heritage entails the retention of minority languages'. The rationale for bilingual education is backed up by a whole string of research findings (see Phillips & Houston 1984, chapters 8 and 9) which demonstrates that the children who maintain their mother language are more likely to be successful in their schooling. The Kaldor Report (1981, p. 9) argues that

> The rationale for bilingual education has been based on the recognition that school experience should be a continuation of early childhood home experience and should build on pre-school experience rather than discard it; that children learn better when they understand clearly what they are being taught; that entering school should not represent a break in the child's life

> experience; that adjustment to school by a young child is difficult enough without the additional trauma of having to cope with the new experience in an unfamiliar language; and that learning the national language may, in fact progress more satisfactorily if the child is allowed to build on the experiences gained in his or her first language than if that first language is disregarded or even suppressed.

It is, of course, recognised by Kaldor and others that the educational resources required for providing bilingual education are not available in all Australian schools. However, the Kaldor Report (1981, p. 11) maintains bilingual education programs to be 'a desirable and significant element in the total spectrum of needs of multicultural education'. A recent Commonwealth report on a national language policy further emphasises the importance of developing bilingual programs in Australian education.

A fifth initiative in multicultural education is related to the developments in ethnic schools which have always existed, but which have only recently received institutional support. 'Ethnic school' is a very general term, which refers to a range of programs, in addition to children's normal school schedule, which vary from a few hours on Saturday mornings to longer weekly periods. The Kaldor Report (1981, p. 11) claims that

> The ethnic school movement has been gathering considerable momentum in recent years, as an increasing number of parents and ethnic communities have felt the need to initiate action to ensure that their children maintain their ancestral languages and develop literacy in their mother tongues, while also gaining some knowledge of their culture.

The debate surrounding the role of ethnic schools is a complex one. There are those who see ethnic schools as an additional institutional burden on children. The Kaldor Report, on the other hand, sees them as a useful back-up system for multicultural education in the state schools and a communication link with members of ethnic groups.

To sum up the discussion in this section, multicultural education is seen by such state agencies as the Schools Commission, the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council and, more recently, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Studies as involving a complex of three educational goals. These goals are:

- to promote intercultural understanding, 'tolerance' and respect for culture patterns other than one's own through improved communication between members of different ethnic groups;
- to encourage maintenance of the culture and linguistic heritage of all ethnic groups in Australia;
- to devise administrative structures and programs which result in the provision of greater equality of educational and social opportunities for non-English-speaking children in Australia.

The Kaldor Report (1981) argues that these educational goals and initiatives, while they represent separate trends and forces in education, should nevertheless be seen as being integral parts of multicultural education. The Report contends that intercultural understanding is enhanced by culture and

> language studies offered to all learners as well as by culture and language maintenance programs, of which only certain sections of the population may

> avail themselves. It is also enhanced by promoting the English language proficiency of the non-English background section of the population. At the same time, the ideals of equal opportunity in education, careers and social life for minority children, adolescents and adults, become more attainable in an atmosphere in which the majority section of the population also places value on cultural and linguistic diversity and where it appreciates the difficulties faced by those who need to conduct the business of everyday life in a language other than the mother tongue.
>
> (Kaldor Report 1981, p. 15)

To a varying degree, attempts have been made in most schools in Australia to achieve these goals of multicultural education through a variety of initiatives, such as offering courses in ethnic studies, infusing the entire curriculum with 'a multicultural perspective', providing greater institutional support for teaching English as a second language, community languages and, to a lesser extent, ethnic schools. However, the extent to which these initiatives have made any difference to the actual school practices is of course a contentious issue. According to Foster (1983, p. 436), her research reveals that, while at a rhetorical level multiculturalism has found some acceptance and support in schools, institutional support for multicultural programs and services remains at a fairly low level. The commonest multicultural education program is still the teaching of English as a second language. And while some urban schools have experimented with measures designed to improve modes of communication with migrant parents, through such initiatives as making available interpreter services, newsletters in languages other than English and the like, these are far too *ad hoc* and scattered to have made any real impact on educational service.

Multiculturalism: Possibilities and problems

It has been argued that multicultural education has had only a very marginal effect on curricular practices and schools, which continue to function largely as assimilationist agencies. However, a more important theoretical question which now needs to be asked is whether multiculturalism as a policy has the potential to transform migrant experience in Australia. Could multicultural education bring about a reduction in levels of ethnocentricism, prejudice and racism which currently exist in Australian society? Could multiculturalism promote greater inter-cultural understanding? Could multiculturalism have any effect on altering existing patterns of social and economic inequalities in Australia? Could multiculturalism be instrumental in providing greater equality of opportunity and access for non-English-speaking Australians? In this final section of the monograph, I will argue that multiculturalism *cannot* achieve the goals it is seeking to promote. On the contrary, I will contend that multiculturalism is an ideology which, by portraying ethnicity as a reified static category divorced from political concerns, is instrumental in diffusing and masking the more fundamental political issues of class inequality and current patterns of social and economic disadvantage in Australia.

It has to be admitted, however, that the policy of multiculturalism represents a considerable advance on the earlier assimilationist and integrationist policies in a number of important respects. First, multiculturalism has encouraged an awareness of the nature and extent of cultural heterogeneity in the Australian community, and amongst migrants. All migrants are not the same, and they all have significant heritages which can contribute to the development of a richer Australian identity. Some appreciation of this fact has meant that no longer are migrant children always laughed at because they speak English with a different accent or because they eat food other than vegemite sandwiches for lunch! However, while this recognition of heterogeneity is important, it must nevertheless be pointed out that heterogeneity also has the potential of constituting significant barriers against the development of a shared class perspective and a shared perception among all those who have common experience of disadvantage and discrimination in Australian society.

Second, multiculturalism has highlighted migrants as active subjects of experience and not simply as objects of an abstract economic policy, to be manipulated in the interest of the demands of capital. With the assimilationist policies migrants had come to be viewed uni-dimensionally as objects of other people's beliefs and behaviour. By stressing their identity and the facts of cultural differences, the multicultural perspective presents migrant groups in a context in which they are now seen as having the capacity for self-activity.

Third, the recognition of cultural diversity in Australia has meant that the political economy of labour migration has become a significant topic for research. By viewing migration as a political process, at least some room has been created for examining the important issues of the reasons for migration and its effects on Australian economy as well as on the lives of individual migrants. The significance of the contribution of migrants in the development of Australian industrial strength has also begun to be recognised.

Fourth, largely as a result of the promotion of multiculturalism as a public policy, the nature and extent of migrant disadvantage is being explored by academics working in a whole range of social sciences. Multicultural discourse has enabled the existence of widespread prejudice and racism, both at individual and institutional levels in Australian society, to be highlighted. Such government institutions as the Human Rights Commission have supported initiatives to lessen the impact of racism on migrants and Aboriginal people. Importantly, however, these institutions have been reluctant to examine the causes of racism, and have therefore been only partially successful.

Now while these developments may constitute an advance on earlier policy perspectives, they are nevertheless piecemeal and inadequate, for they are rooted in an analytical framework which is generally uncritical of the economic structure and the social system that gives rise to the problems migrant groups face in the first place. In what follows I attempt to demonstrate how the theoretical assumptions upon which multiculturalism is based are limited at one level, and misguided at another. This critique will involve an attempt to show how the theoretical problematic with which multiculturalism is concerned is false; how multiculturalism is committed to an unjustifiable form of cultural relativism; and how multiculturalism represents, entrenches and reinforces a certain unacceptable ideology.

Multiculturalism's false problematic

The popular theory of multiculturalism stresses the importance of celebrating ethnicity and cultural identity. The celebration of ethnicity involves highlighting the significance and meaningfulness of preservation of 'ethnic' languages, 'ethnic' religion, kin ties, 'ethnic' customs and folk lifestyles, and their role in the formation of individual and group identities. A whole range of Australian writers, including Isaacs (1975), Smolicz (1979) and Bostock (1981), portray the maintenance of ethnic identities as a moral right, essential for human dignity and intrinsically valuable. But their understanding of the notion of ethnicity has much in common with the accounts of van den Berghe, Barth and Glazer & Moynihan that I criticised earlier. They assume ethnicity to be a primary object of social analysis and therefore present their discussion of the nature of ethnic relations in an apolitical way. I believe that this limitation constitutes a false problematic within which the public policy of multiculturalism is located.

Throughout his theoretical writings Marx (1906) makes a fundamental distinction between phenomenal form and essential relations. Miles (1982, p. 31) explains Marx's use of this distinction in the following manner:

> By phenomenal form, Marx was referring to the way in which the phenomena of the external, social world are represented in human experience while the notion of essential relations was used to refer to the conditions of existence of the phenomenal forms. Phenomenal forms are, therefore, obvious and apparent to the human agent, such that they may even be regarded as natural and inevitable: they constitute the surface appearance of the way in which the world is organised. Indeed, this surface appearance may actually obscure the real, underlying relations, i.e. the essential relations which explain why the phenomenal form is the way that it appears.

Marx's distinction between phenomenal form and essential relations can be used to demonstrate how recent writings on ethnicity are located in a false problematic. It can be shown that recent research into ethnicity by the proponents of multiculturalism has been concerned to highlight only the phenomenal features of cultural life, thus obscuring the essential class relations which are crucial for understanding migrant experience.

It has to be recognised that people do conceive of themselves and others as belonging to certain ethnic groups and do describe certain sorts of situations and relations as being 'ethnic relations'. But this does not mean that the categories of everyday life can be automatically taken up and employed analytically. Social analysis, as was shown earlier, should not be restricted to the interpretative analysis of the actors themselves, for the categories of description used in everyday discourse, because they are uncritical and are confined to the direct experience and appearance of the social world, are likely to provide a false and misleading explanation.

The social experience of migrants in Australia is not confined to their cultural behaviour. Migrant groups occupy a particular position within the class structure of Australian society, and play an important role in the production of economic relations, a role about which they are often not able to theorise. Their inability to theorise about essential relations should not, however, be taken to imply that these relations are not important, or irrelevant to a sociological analysis of ethnic relations. As de Lepervanche (1984, p. 184) points out, studies of multiculturalism

> too easily focus on descriptions of observable regularities in behaviour and of people's expressed beliefs. They capture a series of normative facts, and provide us with much empirical data but little analysis of the way in which the normative orientations of the social factors are governed by underlying structural relationships, such as class.

So, if ethnic phenomena are analysed only by using the interpretative understanding of the actors themselves, we are in danger of reifying the phenomenal forms, that is, analysing them as if they are real, active subjects. The important task should be to make the phenomenal categories of 'ethnicity' and 'cultural identity' the object of critique, and ask how they have come to be constructed and reproduced in the way they have. How have certain cultural differences come to be regarded by migrants themselves as more significant than others? How have ethnic traditions evolved in their specifically Australian contexts? These are questions which are seldom asked by the proponents of multiculturalism, who assume ethnicity to be a static category, resistant to change, even when it has become historically relocated through the process of immigration.

Multiculturalism involves an emphasis upon 'ethnic groups' as self-defined groups whose beliefs, customs and behaviours have to be assessed in terms of their culturally determined distinctiveness. But such an emphasis, as Miles (1982, p. 67) argues,

> tends to abstract the facts of cultural differentiation in the course of making them the primary object of inquiry. At one level this can lead to a simple cataloguing of cultural difference (a dictionary of the 'exotic'), while at another it presents an analysis of the interaction between culturally distinct groups either without reference to or even in direct opposition to class relations. Thus, culture comes to be portrayed as a universal, collectivist characteristic and is used to explain the totality of the belief and behaviour of the individuals who constitute the 'ethnic group'. A simple cataloguing of cultural difference may satisfy a sense of curiosity, but it cannot by itself solve any analytical problems. And it is when attempts are made to grapple with such problems that the primary emphasis upon cultural difference comes to exhibit its most general limitation . . .

The consequences of such abstraction of ethnic differentiation from their politico-historical locations, from production relations, are significant. For one thing, there is a failure to identify class divisions which exist within culturally distinct ethnic groups. While the 'ethnic' shop owner may have some cultural characteristics in common with the workers of his same ethnic group, the differences between them in respect of economic relations are also extremely important. The economic relationship between the 'ethnic' boss and the 'ethnic' worker is not an arbitrary one, dependent solely on their cultural characteristic; rather, it is historically determined by the condition present in the whole sector of commodity production. Exclusive emphasis on cultural differences obscures this fact of commonality across ethnic divisions. We must therefore explore not only the facts of cultural differences, but also how these facts might be used to obstruct the development of a class unity amongst workers across diverse ethnic groups. What would seem to be clear from these remarks is that cultural attributes are only one of the many, but interrelated, determinants of social relations. To focus analysis exclusively upon the establishment and maintenance of ethnic boundaries (e.g. language, dress, diet, etc.), irrespective of production relations, is therefore not only misguided but also ideological (see Miles 1982, pp. 67–8).

Moreover, it is mistaken to assume that cultural differences are of primary importance equally to all members of an ethnic group. Economic circumstances always have the potential of bursting the 'ethnic' bond between the employer and the employees if the conditions of production necessitate the imposition of those conditions upon the employees which for material and political reasons they find unacceptable. In this respect there is little difference between class relations within Anglo-Celtic-Australians and those within the migrant groups. Moreover, in response to the demands of the production process, the possibility of the development of collective motivation and aspirations across all cultural boundaries, of both employers and employees must be acknowledged. In this process, the possibility of the migrant employer assuming the position of a *petit bourgeoisie* whose interests are similar to those of Anglo-Celtic-Australian employers has to be recognised. Yet much of the recent research on ethnicity largely fails to provide an account of the ethnic *petit bourgeoisie*, and of the material conditions that permit the formation of such a class position within an ethnic group. A fundamental conceptual error made by most proponents of multiculturalism therefore is that they assume a degree of uniformity and homogeneity among members of ethnic groups which seldom exists.

In the end, the crucial issue at the heart of any debate about multiculturalism is not about the catalogue of cultural differences but about the class position migrants come to occupy in Australian capitalism. It is also about the material forces which determine the migration process. What is so striking about the various migrant groups in Australia is not their cultural differences, but rather the similarity of the material and economic circumstances that they experienced before their migration and the experience they had of the migration process itself.

It is clear, then, that the apolitical approach to ethnic relations, which the theory multiculturalism assumes, is fundamentally misguided. An adequate grasp of migrant experience in Australia is not possible unless we pay attention to the political nature of ethnic relations and the dynamics of change and class conflict, and the place of migration in the overall production of social relations in Australia. To study comparative cultural differences in abstraction from these issues is to only identify a phenomenal process which, as Miles (1982, p. 71) points out,

> has real political and ideological effects on, inter alia, the development of class struggle and the formation of class consciousness. But, equally, one must recognise that the persons who constitute a group which is formed and identified on this basis also have a position in essential relations. That is, they have a position in production (and, thereby, class) relations.

The issue of racism and inter-cultural understanding, as a particular example of ethnic relations, is linked to these considerations. An apolitical and ahistorical account of ethnic relations, such as the one the proponents of multiculturalism assume, views racism as a manifestation of the phenomenological experience of individuals. According to this interpretivist view, racist attitudes are irrational pathological phenomena that are a function of either an individual's inadequate personality or his lack of understanding of other cultures' mores and customs. The proponents of multiculturalism recognise the long history of the existence of racist attitudes in Australia. However, they fail to provide a satisfactory historical explanation of why such penetration of racism in Australian society has been so systematic and complete. Their view is that it is ignorance which causes racism, and that once ethnic groups learn to live with each other in a climate of mutual accommodation, prejudiced attitudes would disappear, or at least be greatly reduced. The Galbally Report (1978) thus emphasises the need to develop in children 'a multicultural attitude' through educative programs which involve teaching about diverse cultural traditions. Galbally hopes that by learning about other cultures children would be able better to 'communicate' with members of other cultural groups, and that this communication would inevitably be sincere and enlightening.

Now, while there is great merit in inter-cultural communication, learning about cultures alone cannot significantly reduce instances of racism in Australia. If my arguments in this section are correct, then an analysis of racism in terms of individual psychological factors is fundamentally mistaken. Racism in society is ultimately a manifestation of an on-going collective process of group interaction, whereby the status and behaviour of minorities is defined and redefined with respect to the dominant group. However, these definitions are not arbitrary, for the collective processes and group interactions are linked to the capitalist mode of production. Castles & Kosack (1973, p. 459) point out that in capitalist societies, racism against migrants is instrumental in creating and maintaining class divisions within the working class. They contend that prejudiced attitudes as such do not cause the discrimination that immigrants experience. Discrimination against migrants has its source, they argue, in conflict over economic and social interests. Prejudiced attitudes emerge as a justification for discrimination but, once institutionalised, may in time become intensified, as a consequence of a complex interaction of economic, political and ideological relations. Castles & Kosack (1973, p. 460) maintain further that racism serves 'to preserve the *status quo* by, firstly, legitimating the exploitation of immigrants, secondly, diverting workers' attention from the true causes of their insecure position, thirdly, splitting the labour movement and weakening class consciousness'. They conclude therefore that racism will not disappear unless the economic and social conditions which help produce it also disappear.

Now if Castles & Kosack are correct in their analysis of the nature of prejudice and racism, and I believe that they are, then the hopes of the proponents of multicultural education would appear to be misplaced. For it is mistaken to assume that simply learning about other cultures can promote intercultural understanding and lead to reduction in levels of prejudice directed against immigrants. As de Lepervanche (1984, p. 194) observes, 'Education *per se* will not lead to the removal of prejudice and discrimination or to the institution of equal opportunity.' If racism is a product of socio-economic conditions, then we cannot expect to change prejudicial attitudes simply by encouraging cultural tolerance in classrooms. Racism cannot be effectively tackled unless we also attend to the economic and social conditions which help produce it. Multiculturalism, however widespread the acceptance of its rhetoric, is incapable of doing this because it is presented in precisely the form which permits any critical examination of the existing structures to be regarded as unnecessary.

Cultural relativism

Amongst the common arguments in support of multiculturalism is the view that all cultures have a moral right to co-exist together in a pluralist society without interference from the state; indeed, the state is said to have the obligation to ensure that various diverse cultural practices continue to survive. This view is presented in direct contrast to what was thought to be the racist overtones of assimilationist policies. Under multiculturalism, all cultural values are to be regarded as equally legitimate, all deserving of our equal support. An extreme expression of this view can be found in Jeffcoate (1979). Jeffcoate insists that no matter how peculiar some cultural traditions may seem, educational institutions in a multicultural society must not be *judgmental* about these traditions—that all cultural views are of equal validity. Jeffcoate claims, moreover, somewhat oddly, that even when they encounter racism in the classroom teachers should maintain a neutral position—their task is to listen, and not to preach or be judgmental.

Jeffcoate's view is referred to in philosophical literature as constituting 'cultural relativism'. Cultural relativism has been entertained by moral philosophers from time to time, but has been found to be an extremely weak doctrine. Cultural relativism involves an acceptance of the view that a person's values, moral or cultural, are 'relative' to his culture, in the sense of being a function of it or causally dependent on it. The possibility of universal ethical truth is hence denied. Thus, for example, if a man who lives in a society in which polygamy is practiced has more than one wife, the cultural relativist would say that he acts rightly. On the other hand, the relativist would say that the polygamist in a monogamous society does not act rightly. According to the cultural relativist, 'what is right in one culture is not necessarily right in another'.

This view has considerable intuitive appeal. However, a thorough philosophical examination reveals it to be beset with many conceptual problems. For one thing, in a pluralist society, which still has to be governed by a set of legal norms, how is one to arrive at common institutional values which might meet the requirements of all cultural groups. Secondly, in order to state cultural relativism in a coherent way, we have to know what 'culture' consists in, and how cultural boundaries are to be clearly defined. We saw earlier how ethnic boundaries are self-ascribed and are constantly changing, together with the allegiance of individuals to them. The same applies to cultural groups. The obscurity of the notion of culture can perhaps best be illustrated by asking the question, 'What features must a group of people have in common in order to be members of the same culture?' Thirdly, cultural relativism assumes a static view of values in a culture; yet historical evidence clearly demonstrates that individuals and groups adapt and change their cultural values, often following contact with other cultures.

It is suggested by Jeffcoate (1979) that his view of multiculturalism is the natural development of an enlightened, tolerant attitude towards the various customs of ethnic groups living in a pluralist society. While one may admire Jeffcoate's open-mindedness the same can not be said about his logic; his suggestion for greater tolerance involves a major contradiction. Tolerance is above all a moral value, a value which Jeffcoate would want to consider universal. But this would clearly involve a break from his belief in cultural relativism; for, according to that thesis, the act of tolerance is morally right if, and only if, it is permitted by the customs of its culture. So if one lives in a culture in which tolerance is not particularly valued, then one is perfectly free to be intolerant. This would seem to leave Jeffcoate and other proponents of multiculturalism who assume cultural relativism in the logically odd position of having to maintain both that cultural relativism is correct and valid and that tolerance is universally right. As Kalantzis & Cope (1984, p. 96) clearly point out, multiculturalism of this variety 'comes to grief . . . with its concomitant relativist ethics'. They argue:

> If all cultures are equal and to be respected for the sake of the self-esteem of their participants, what do we do about threads within cultures which are endemically racist, sexist and anti-liberal? Multiculturalism has problems with any statements which are mandatory, such as those about non-sexist education, because the mandatoriness implies that not all cultural viewpoints are relative. Some are not to be respected as equally valid and laudable. Similarly, the whole thrust of multiculturalism is against racism and prejudice, but this contradicts the 'tolerance' of cultural pluralism. Racism and discrimination are simply not to be tolerated. The solution to cultural conflict according to the policy therefore, is 'negotiation' or the 'management of cultural difference' which, given the implementation of certain social values viewed as mandatory in education, can be no more than talking 'them' into 'our' way of thinking, nicely. For that matter, the whole principle of negotiation is entirely foreign (indeed, a sign of educational degeneracy) to some cultural groupings. Philosophically, cultural pluralism can come to grips with none of these dilemmas.

Clearly, not all cultural groups, and customs, have equal claim on our moral support because some principles of social life are more morally supportable than others. Moral views are subject to challenge, revision and falsification in the same way as are judgments of any other kind (see Rizvi 1985a). When customs, such as apartheid, are found to be morally reprehensible, it should clearly be said so, for they involve treatment of human beings in profoundly inhumane ways.

Multiculturalism, in so far as it involves cultural relativism, has a number of other unacceptable consequences for some migrants, particularly women. As de Lepervanche points out, women who have migrated to Australia from countries which have even worse sexist practices have their disadvantages compounded under a policy of multiculturalism. She argues:

> Having lost what little financial independence they might have had, those unemployed women from ethnic communities that uphold extreme patriarchal values are especially vulnerable to both class oppression and sexist discrimination. Certainly, Australian society is male dominated too, but many women from rural backgrounds in other societies (from which Australia has recruited immigrants) are even more subjugated than Australians. In many cases, these women are throughout their lives subservient to men—first to their fathers and brothers and later to their husbands; and the ethnic communities themselves are also dominated by males. The continued celebration of ethnicity by governments and ethnic organizations may well prove an added burden for these women.
>
> (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 208)

Clearly, then, in so far as multiculturalism involves an acceptance of cultural relativism, it is a doctrine which can be objected to on substantial moral grounds.

Multiculturalism as an ideology

Proponents of multiculturalism have rarely confronted the issue of how Aboriginal people fit into their pluralist scheme. Aboriginal groups have always maintained that they have certain prior rights to Australia's material resources (Barlow 1984), but how these Aboriginal claims can be accomodated within a policy which affirms equality of status to cultural groups is a question which cannot be adequately dealt with by advocates of multiculturalism.

This issue highlights another major problem with multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a doctrine which lacks a historical perspective. Aboriginal claim to land rights is a historical claim and derives its validity from the premise that the dispossessed should be adequately compensated for, and *not* treated in the same manner as other cultural groups in Australia. As a liberal-individualist theory, multiculturalism, on the other hand, assumes the *status quo*, with its attendant patterns of social and economic inequalities, to be perfectly natural, and prescribes equality of access within the existing economic circumstances.

It is no wonder, then, that those who stand to benefit from maintaining and reinforcing boundaries are those who are already strongly enough positioned to ensure that their ethnic status would be advantageous. It is of great comfort to the so-called 'ethnic' leaders to know that they would be at the centre rather than the periphery of Australian political life. Accordingly, multiculturalism proves most attractive to those who are already largely assimilated into the dominant culture. Indeed, in Australia over the past decade the representatives of ethnic groups who have espoused multiculturalism most vigorously have been those who stood to protect their class interests. As Jakubowicz (1984) points out, it was the 'ethnic' *petit bourgeoisie* which most readily volunteered itself to assist the Fraser government in promoting multiculturalism.

For the disadvantaged migrants multiculturalism has brought few social and economic benefits. Steinberg (1981, p. 256) argues:

> a pluralism based on systematic inequalities is inherently unstable because ethnic groups at or near the bottom of the social ladder have little reason to endorse the ethnic status quo. On the contrary, groups aspiring to class mobility are typically forced to adopt strategies that are designed to advance their class interests, but at the same time whittle away at the pluralist structure. Two such strategies may be observed, one within the disadvantaged group, the other in its relationship with more advantaged groups.

For as long as ethnicity is associated with class disadvantage—with higher unemployment rates, a lower standard of living and jobs at the bottom end of the occupational structure—then powerful incentives exist for migrants to assimilate into the mainstream culture since, in economic terms at least, this will improve their chances for a better life. Indeed, the Australian experience demonstrates that most disadvantaged migrants have been willing to shed their *public* ethnicity in order to obtain greater economic security (see Birrell & Birrell 1981). Given that structural features of Australian society are to remain the same under some spurious rhetoric of social cohesion, it would seem that equality of opportunity would be available to only those who are prepared to assimilate into those structures. In view of existing patterns of the distribution of power, equal opportunity in practice means equal opportunity only for those persons whose ideas and values conform with those of the dominant Anglo-Celtic-Australian culture—those who possess real power. In education, since the provision of equal opportunity is already defined in terms of goals which favour Anglo-Celtic-Australian students, only the assimilated can succeed. For migrant pupils, this means that only those who absorb these Anglo-Celtic-Australian values are likely to succeed academically and socially and have a measure of equality of educational opportunity.

Its proponents argue that multiculturalism is a theory of society in which ideals of democracy and pluralism come together in policy. But the effective implementation of this policy is only possible in a society where there is a basic parity among its constituent ethnic groups. Given that this is not the case in Australia, where some ethnic groups have historically come to occupy inferior class positions, pluralism cannot 'be innocent of class bias and consistent with democratic principles' (Steinberg 1981, p. 261). Democracy and pluralism are therefore not as compatible as the proponents of multiculturalism claim, essentially because pluralist structures tend to reinforce existing class inequalities.

The idea, central to multiculturalism, that ethnic groups maintain their cultural identity, is therefore fundamentally ideological. As Collins (1978) points out, the encouragement of a culturally divided workforce to celebrate its differences has political implications. The celebration of ethnic differences serves only to divide the working class: in competition over jobs and social benefits, ethnic groups become increasingly suspicious of each other. Here we find the roots of prejudice and racism developing. In a political context, ethnic boundaries are strengthened at the expense of working-class solidarity. Emphasis on the celebration of ethnic differences also has the consequence of diverting attention away from structural class inequalities that currently exist in Australian society. As de Lepervanche observes: 'if we concentrate on drawing cultural boundaries too clearly there is the danger, in a class society of unequals, of isolating those who are occupationally segmented and culturally or racially distinct from others in a similar social position' (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 208).

Conclusion

It has been argued in this monograph that the 'revival' of ethnicity is regressive, and that multicultural education is fundamentally ideological, for in celebrating ethnic heterogeneity, it systematically obscures and legitimises the essential class inequalities which produce the disadvantages migrants in Australia face. Multiculturalism assumes, moreover, that culture is the most fundamental factor in addressing the problems of non-English-speaking migrants. It thus ignores other socio-historical factors, such as class, which are more fundamental in explaining economic and social disadvantage. We know that schooling systems are inherently conservative and that they often reflect the economic structure of the wider society, in which class stratification continues to play a major role in the maintenance of socio-economic structure (see Bowles & Gintis 1976). Social analysis which neglects attending to these issues is bound to be inadequate. More importantly, it is an analysis which is ideological in the sense that it diverts us from confronting the history of political and economic exploitation which has had, perhaps, a more important role than has ethnicity in the structural organisation of Australian society.

Multiculturalism represents the use of a culturally-determined set of ideas and practices to justify certain practices and protect specific interests. As a form of ideology, it represents an attempt to celebrate ethnic differences and practices in order to institutionalise those differences, and thus legitimate current patterns of social inequalities. In doing this, multiculturalism also tends to obfuscate the common experiences, histories and social and political conditions of migrant groups and hence obscure the degree of commonality of experience that exists between the migrant and the Anglo-Celtic-Australian working class in Australia. Arguably, these commonalities, in terms of political and economic relationships, are more profound than the ethnic differences based on cultural heritages or purportedly biologically determined entities.

Superficially, multiculturalism appears to represent a radical change from earlier assimilationist perspectives, but the analysis presented in this monograph reveals this change to be ideological, rather than structural. That is, as Jakubowicz (1984, p. 17) points out, it rests on a notion of ethnicity which 'mediates Australian class relations by reifying the history of peoples into a static category of theoretical labelling'.

It follows that the celebration of ethnicity should not be seen as a major element in the development of educational policy, designed to meet the needs and interests of migrant youth. By all means, students, migrants and Anglo-Australians alike, should all be encouraged to examine the structure of their society, but this analysis should not be a simple cataloguing of ethnic differences, but an exploration of the relation between structures of dominance and their transformation, and an examination of the way people can respond to oppression and promote effective social change. The emphasis on the ahistorical and apolitical study of ethnic histories, customs, religions, music and languages, and so on, in current multicultural education programs has led to the celebration of differences. Yet, it is only by highlighting historically constituted similarities of social experience that migrants, as well as other disadvantaged groups, by sharing their related interests can produce the kind of solidarity required to challenge the structural and symbolic processes that promote inequalities in our society.

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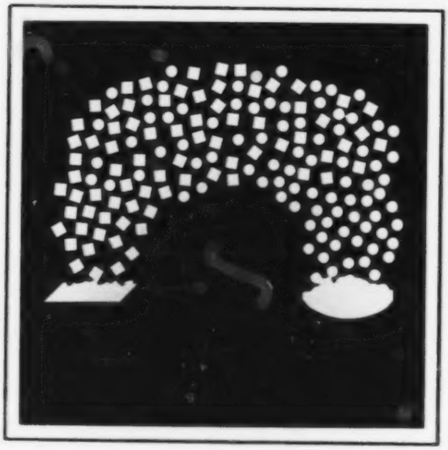
Readings



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From race to ethnicity

M. de Lepervanche

Source: M. de Lepervanche, 'From race to ethnicity', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 1, March 1980, pp. 24-37.

Growing up in Australia before the Second World War it was very important to be white and British. Children in countries formerly coloured pink on the map extolled the virtues of whiteness as they sang hymns about 'lesser breeds without the law' and recited poetry on the white man's burden. A pre-war book about foreign settlers even carried the pejorative title *Non-Britishers in Australia* (Lyng, 1927). Yet, identifying foreigners and even being one has become quite fashionable during the last decade. We no longer stress how white and British we are, except in quotation marks. The proper epithets these days are multicultural society, pluralism and ethnicity. We have theories as well as policies about these cultural forms and all decent social scientists know that the earlier pressure on Aborigines and immigrants to assimilate was an aspect of W.A.S.P. dominance, and that racism is thoroughly discredited. We have a Racial Discrimination Act (1975) to prove it.

A dip into some recent texts and journals in the social sciences tends to support the view that not only is assimilation passé and properly relegated to ideology, but race is no longer considered the problem it used to be—at least by people who are safely white. Alternatively, if we do not mention race it will go away. This propensity is evident both here and overseas. The Research Unit at the University of Bristol changed its name from a unit of race relations to one of ethnic relations soon after its recent creation. This was not a hypocritical euphemism, according to Maurice Freedman, but a justified move to prevent misunderstanding (1976: 182). In Australia, Taft commented eight years ago on the undesirable implications of referring to 'races' and stated an explicit preference for the eclectic but vaguer term 'ethnic groups' (Taft, 1972: 67). By the mid-1970s the ethnicity business had become a vast enterprise, positively transnational in scope. In the United States the expression 'New Ethnicity" had highly respectable scientific status; it provided the title for the 1973 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society. And papers from the IXth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences have been published as *Perspectives on Ethnicity* (Bennett, 1975). The term ethnicity appears in many other international publications and it has proliferated in the titles of recent journals. Someone has even written a book called *The Declining Significance of Race* (Wilson, 1978).

Ethnicity is also a major concern at the policy-making level. Governments are encouraging ethnics to celebrate their differences. America has affirmative action; Britain has its Ethnic Research Units, and Australian bureaucracies concerned with ethnic affairs have burgeoned. In 1971 the Australian Minister for Immigration could still refer to 'undigested minorities' (Lynch, 1971: 16) but immigrants these days are no longer sticking in the social gullet, nor are they expected to bow to Anglo-conformity; they are encouraged to mobilise for cultural festivities and social welfare grants, and academics have been tempted to research all this ethnic activity.[1]

Business has not been slow either. You can buy an ethnic attaché case and other ethnic arts and crafts. You can perhaps work for Ethnic Communications Pty Ltd, Ethnic Enterprises or Ethnic TV Production. You may eat at the Ethnic Restaurant, and if you feel strongly about your roots and your remains you should contact Ethnic Burials and Cremations.[2]

The term ethnic or ethnical is quite old and, according to the O.E.D., meant heathen, gentile or pertaining to race. But ethnicity is a new word; it first appeared in 1953 when David Riesman used it (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975: 1). In certain contexts it now includes (as in the old meaning) race, but in others it is obviously a replacement word for this increasingly offensive term. Some commentators say that ethnicity applies to all of us; others are more selective. In Australia, Jean Martin preferred to couple 'ethnic' with 'minority' so that Aborigines and recent immigrants of non-Anglo-Saxon background and their children are ethnic whereas the culturally dominant Anglo-Saxon majority is not (Martin, 1978: 16). This means that the quaint national custom of males dressed in thick woollen kilts dancing about in Sydney's summer heat on New Year's Day is not ethnic. If Greeks, not Scots, behaved like this it would be.[3]

Empirically, race relations have not gone away, despite the trade in ethnicity. Race is very much alive and simmering in Britain (Sivanandan, 1976: 347-368; Ward, 1978: 464-480); in the United States one-third of their negroes still constitute an underclass (Wilson, 1978: 154); and in Australia the Aborigines endure a higher rate of malnutrition than we do, live in conditions we would not tolerate and shoulder a higher unemployment rate than whites (Poverty Inquiry, 1975; Population Inquiry, 1975, Vol. 2; Commissioner for Community Relations Report, 1979). The National Front has established a branch in this country and so has the Ku Klux Klan; other supporters of a White Australia include the Immigration Control Association and the Immigration Restriction Council (Commissioner for Community Relations, 1979: 15; Curthoys and Markus, 1978: xviii). Old fashioned race discrimination seems very much alive in practice but governments, academics and others are talking about it less.

An immediate explanation would perhaps be that many of us are ashamed of our racist past and are trying to make amends by getting on with more constructive enterprises like inventing new terms. A more cynical reason for anthropological soft-pedalling of race in favour of ethnicity might turn on the increasing difficulty of doing research (on our terms) in ex-colonial countries. Instead, we study the interesting customs of the ethnics right in our own society. In Australia there are more white ethnics than coloured people. In Britain and the United States, on the other hand, the reclassification of their larger coloured populations as ethnics might make everyone feel more equal.

There is, of course, the very definite existence in the real world of groups and individuals who stress their origins and their differences and who use these in cultural and political contexts. I do not doubt this; nor do I wish to deny the experiences and perceptions of those who feel strongly about, or on account of, their origins. Ethnicity in these empirical manifestations *is* socially salient these days. But why the new term 'ethnicity' and why is ethnic diversity celebrated today when the past was very different? In some respects we are dealing with euphemism and a definitional flutter, given the continuing presence of race problems, but this in itself calls for explanation. I will suggest therefore that in social scientific theory and research, and in government policy, the trend from race to ethnicity (via assimilation) can be examined as a series of ideological transformations in the recreation of hegemony. In a short essay it is impossible to do justice to this topic but I shall attempt to point out a few signposts for further exploration.

There are at least three common usages of the term ideology. First, it can refer to a whole system of beliefs and meanings that represent reality; to those who order their lives by these representations, ideologies 'work', they make sense of the word and they sanction existing social relations. Second, ideology can mean a system of meanings and values that express and project the interests of a particular class or group. In this sense, ideology can mystify social relations and constitute a system of illusory beliefs. Ideology can also be a very powerful weapon in class domination and struggle. Both the first and second meanings are interrelated and should be examined in association with the third meaning, namely, the sense in which ideology can refer to the general process of the production of meanings and ideas. In social life all three are connected and it is important to explore this connection. As a general guide to shape our enterprise, the concept hegemony is particularly useful here. It is a concept more embracing than ideology in that it relates the whole social process (with its dominant political, social and cultural forces) to specific distributions of power and influence (Marx, 1970: 21; Bottomore and Rubel, 1961: 17-43; Gramsci, 1971: 12-13; Williams, 1977: 55-71, 108-114). For present purposes, its use directs attention away from the focus on specific groups and their self-definitions, and encourages analysis of the social totality in which the groups are embedded.

Although in practice people internalise a given type of cultural dominance, this experience is not necessarily perceived as painful, exploitative or repressive. For most people hegemony constitutes a sense of reality; the pervasive cultural forms make sense of 'empirical fact'. What is curious in the present context is that in Australia over the last hundred years the acceptable cultural forms and definitions concerning the non-British have change so markedly. In 19th century Australia, racist behaviour was quite acceptable. In those days it was obvious to a W.A.S.P., or even an Irishman, that coloured races were inferior; that was 'empirical fact' in all European colonies, and scientists could prove it. In an argument with J. S. Mill, one writer in the London *Anthropological Review* of 1866 put the matter quite clearly: To Mill, he states,

> the term Negro simply implies a person who has, till within the last few months, unfortunately held an inferior *social* position. But it does not imply, as it does to the anthropologist, a being of inferior *organic* constitution, in whom corporeal function and animal impulse too readily dominate moral sentiment and intellectual aptitude, a being who is not merely a barbarian in his *habits*, but a savage in his *hereditary* proclivities . . . Now the data in reference to race are the concrete *facts* of race, not *abstract* political principles . . . Mr. Mill, in short, has overstepped his province (134-135).[4]

Today, we label these arguments as racist ideology. We know now that coloured people are not so inferior—after all, they won in Vietnam. And within Australia we have accepted thousands of non-British and non-European foreigners as settlers. We no longer refer to a White Australia; immigrants are encouraged to keep their customs instead of suffering their origins, and Australians flock to Chinese and other ethnic restaurants. Hence we have ethnicity as empirical fact. Those who object may be subject to sanctions under anti-discrimination legislation. In short, it is no longer culturally acceptable to be xenophobic or racist; instead, our political and intellectual leaders are exhorting us to practice multiculturalism.

It could be argued that this change from race to ethnicity is a humane ideological response (in the first meaning of ideology) to changing empirical fact. According to one commentator on North America, 'The new ethnicity . . . stands for a true, real multicultural cosmopolitanism' (Novak, 1974: 25). But I am suggesting that the class nature of Australian society (and ideology in the other two meanings) have something to do with this transformation. In class systems all people do not have equal access to defining what is culturally acceptable; some have more power and influence than others and therefore more opportunity of having their definitions accepted. Thus hegemony can be analysed as the lived dominance and cultural subordination of particular classes of people. The question then is: Why have the dominant definers changed their minds and our cultural forms? Alternatively, what way is this shift in the culturally acceptable related to structural changes in Australian society? To remind ourselves of the extent of the change I make brief reference to the past before looking at some of the current ethnicity literature in an attempt to find answers to these questions.

. . . .

One hundred years ago in Australia, being non-white or even ethnic was not worth much.

In 1877 the Chinese Immigration Restriction Act was passed in Queensland which initiated the big groundswell of colour consciousness that culminated in the Federal Immigration Restriction Act (1901)—otherwise known as the White Australia policy. During the last two decades of last century and early in the 20th, racist rhetoric became quite feverish. White workers had always resented cheap, competitive labour but by the 1890s others besides workers campaigned against non-Europeans. Both Chinese and Melanesians were portrayed as evil, lascivious, leprous creatures, fit for no white man's land. Many Chinese by that time had stopped providing cheap labour and were competing with whites as small independent businessmen in furniture factories and market gardens, or as farmers. Correspondingly, to the White bourgeoisie and petit bourgeois their stereotype slowly transformed from the good and faithful servant to the threatening bearer of all manner of moral diseases (Evans *et al.*, 1975: 261-262). Above all else white women had to be protected; the white race had to be defended by its women 'whom Nature had entrusted with the instinct for racial purity' (Osborne, 1978: 115). The *Bulletin* warned that no white woman was safe after dark in Queensland: 'What with the black scourge and the yellow curse, the State is fast becoming a hell on earth' (Evans *et al.*, 1975: 213).

Further south in N.S.W. circumstances were also grim. According to parliamentary debates at the turn of the century, Indians were hawking their wares about the countryside, or entering dairying and agricultural areas where they frightened lonely ladies, depressed wages and contaminated the milk (Yarwood, 1964: 124-5). Italians and other Mediterraneans were accused of similar offences (Evans *et al.*, 1975: 359).

This racist rhetoric accompanied mounting discriminatory practice and legislation against the Chinese and other aliens (Bailey, 1937; Bartholomew, 1966). The mass of Kanaka legislation for instance excluded the Melanesians from all work except the most menial labour in the cane-fields, and they were denied the privilege of naturalisation. Indians were similarly restricted, as they were with respect to voting and holding freehold title (Evans *et al.*, 1975: 147-234; de Lepervanche, 1978: 84). As far as the Chinese were concerned, in Queensland by the end of the century in the areas of agriculture, land-holding, mining, manufacturing, the franchise, unionised labour and naturalisation, they were systematically restricted, contained and eventually excluded. In South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and N.S.W., factory legislation also restricted Chinese business enterprise (Price, 1974). The Aborigines, meanwhile, had virtually been dispossessed of their land, and the Reserve Acts had begun to 'protect' them by excluding them from white society until they died out (Rowley, 1970). When they did not, assimilation was the policy to remove them from the land (Wilkie, 1977: 86).

As discriminatory behaviour against the non-whites increased so too did the prejudice against them intensify. Once established, and while discriminatory behaviour continued, the prejudice in turn created further areas of discrimination. This dialectical process characterised 19th and early 20th century race relations in Australia. And the ethnics who were around in those days did not fare much better. Many Mediterraneans became 'black', especially if they shared the occupations associated with non-whites (Evans *et al.*, 1975: 6).

Racist behaviour and ideology initially served ruling class interests during colonial expansion. The Aborigines were dispossessed, destroyed and then despised as pastoralism took over their land. Big employers exploited the cheapest possible workers and imported coloured labour for this purpose. This divided the working class and set white against non-white competitor, and throughout the 19th century the basic public conflicts between European and non-European were over the Chinese at the goldfields and cheap labour. Once established in our social life, racist ideology provided cultural ammunition for other intra-class conflict when competition erupted between small white businessmen and farmers on the one hand and the Chinese, Indian, Italian and even some Kanaka settlers who succeeded in becoming petit bourgeois on the other (Burgman, 1978; de Lepervanche, 1978).

Changing material conditions in Australia and changing relations between the colonies and Britain produced other variations in the connections between class and race. These, in turn, generated further cultural and ideological manifestations. The sugar industry provides illustration. The Queensland plantation system worked by coloured labour was, at the end of the 19th century, already becoming unprofitable. Melanesian labour by 1889 had risen in cost by 50% since 1883 (Easterby, n.d.: 10). During the depression of the 1890s, when the sugar industry suffered severely, white workers were prepared to labour in the canefields and demonstrated their capacity to do so. By this time the sugar milling system was inefficient and unsatisfactory which reduced the competitive value of Australian sugar on the world market. Too much variation in price charged by mills attached to large plantations also contributed to disaffection and trouble in the industry. The eventual outcome was centralisation of the mill system in which CSR led the way, cutting up its large estates and selling or leasing them to small white growers (Easterby, n.d.). Although some north Queensland planters defended the plantation system, other landowners followed C.S.R.'s lead and the sugar industry switched to a system of small white farmers. Queensland Liberals, including many working class supporters, had long campaigned for this, and Premier Griffith intended that agricultural labour should not be degraded as an occupation for coloureds alone. The Royal Commission in 1885 which investigated kidnapping and other illegal recruitment of Melanesians gave the Liberal cause a push. So too did the planters' indifference towards improved techniques which undermined the industry's foundation. As the small farmers flourished the voices of the big employers, who had previously called for coloured labour, died down and the small white landowners joined the workers in campaigning for a White Australia (Evans *et al.*, 1975: 156, 170-175).

Meanwhile, in another political context, anti-coloured sentiment and the celebration of whiteness was unifying those who worked for Australian nationhood and against imperial interference (McQueen, 1970: 25-27). Conservatives and Liberals both used White Australia rhetoric to win votes and encourage nationalism. The expression 'White' Australia only began to appear frequently during the 1880s (Yarwood, 1968: 72), but by the 1901 debates on the Immigration Restriction Bill the ideology of racial homogeneity and whiteness provided a powerful device for fostering support for Federation. In doing so it joined white labour to white capital and masked the conflicting interests between them which had been all too evident in the bitter industrial strife of the 1890s. Indeed, to read what Alfred Deakin said in 1901, it is almost possible to believe that the great maritime strike and the shearing disputes which disrupted the country never really took place. I quote:

> A united race means not only that its members can intermarry and associate without degradation on either side, but implies . . . an aspiration towards the same ideals, of a people possessing the same general cast of character, tone of thought, the same constitutional training and traditions . . . (Willard, 1923: 189).

As racism became hegemonic the intellectuals of the day contributed their share to the process. Missionaries relied on the good book and found safe ideological justification for exploited Kanaka labour in Queensland by invoking the Christian duty of a servant to his master (Evans *et al.*, 1975: 202). The medicos adopted a different approach. During the plantation era one of the most popular themes was scientific justification for why white men could *not* work in the tropics (Hunt, 1978: 85). But as coloured labour was excluded the medical profession discovered that, after all, it was quite safe for whites to work in places like northern Queensland (Rivett, 1962: 22). The profession also supported a White Australia in other ways. Sir Raphael Cilento argued that Australia's greatest danger was not from attack by foreign arms but from invasion by foreign germs introduced by indiscriminate Asian immigration (London, 1970: 159). If the unwanted did manage to enter despite official policy there were proper scientific ways of identifying them. In 1903 for instance a government medical office, after examining the son of a German man and Egyptian woman testified as follows: 'I have carefully examined [this man] . . . and find him to be half cast (sic) with a large proportion of black blood in his veins' (Yarwood, 1964: 51). Historians tended to emphasise nationalism more. Myra Willard in her classic on the White Australia policy argues that 'Australia's plea that racial unity is essential to national unity, and, consequently, to national progress and usefulness, seems sound in the light of world experience' (1923: 207).

But perhaps the most imaginative of all were the writers in anthropological journals. After all, race was their business. In Britain since the 1860s, as I indicated earlier, books and journal articles on head measurements, other physical and social characteristics of the races and their relative ranking had appeared; versions of all this surfaced in the colonies. In an article on 'The Yellow Species of Mankind' from *The Australian Anthropological Journal* 1897 we find this species to be

> . . . enduring, patient, plodding . . . They have a constitution with which upon poor food they continue to work, day after day, in bad climates of many and varied kinds, hot and cold, moist or dry. They are slow, methodical . . . not capable of many new inventions . . . are much addicted to ritualistic observances and ceremonial practices . . .(93).

By contrast, there is the Canstadt race who have 'occupied and maintained themselves in North America, the West Indies, the East Indies, Australia, the Islands of the Pacific . . .' (1897: 91). These people love danger and dashing off into the wilds to engage in trading or commercial ventures and

> in a few years having beaten all competition, to emerge successful and wealthy from its thrifty and economical procedures, or to attack all weaker races, and having conquered them, to guide and use them for its profit and advantage . . . (1897: 90).

This kind of writing could easily have appeared in a British journal; there was nothing uniquely Australian about it. Rather, Europe and Britain produced a wealth of race literature, justifying both class and race divisions, and Australians drew upon it.[5] Most social scientists would deplore this bizarre material today; so too would many ruling class spokesmen and politicians. As Levi Strauss puts it, the confusion of race in the biological sense with sociological and psychological productions of human civilisation is the original sin of Anthropology (1975: 95). Benedict, on the other hand, says of the 19th century scholars that 'Their researches on race advanced knowledge; the racist conclusions they drew were a quite different matter' (1942: 130). My point is that both were related and that the other question to ask is: what generated all the head measuring and racial categorising in the first place?

Bearing this question in mind, I turn now to consider some of the current ethnicity literature. This time the inspirational source is the United States rather than Britain or Europe.

. . . .

The vast bulk of the material on ethnicity is exceptionally empirical in emphasis and, implicitly or explicitly, critical of class analysis.[6] There are many and varied usages of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group', and much scholarly research is given up to definitions and typologies in an effort to grasp the essential empirical entity (e.g. McKay and Lewins, 1978). Writers stress that ethnic groups are real entities in today's world; they have persisted despite all efforts in the melting pot; they exist in both industrial societies and in the Third World. Although the latter used to be called other races, tribes, cultural-linguistic groups and so on, today they are all ethnic groups. Everywhere they act as pressure groups, adopt strategies, protest against discrimination, mobilise for effective action, compete for resources and otherwise assert their reality (see: Barth, 1969: 9; Bennett, 1975:4; Despres, 1975: 196; Brass and van den Berghe, 1976: 199; Epstein, 1978: x). The literature even tends to depict ethnicity as a 20th century form of social structure in contradistinction to class which was allegedly a 19th century form (e.g. Glazer and Moynihan, 1975). According to Glazer and Moynihan, the emergence of ethnicity over class as an organising principle has arisen because the state has assumed too important a directing influence in both socialist and welfare (democratic) societies and, in the face of this monster, ethnicity has triumphed because of its strategic efficacy as a basis for asserting claims and negotiating with governments. To be successful these days

> it becomes necessary to disaggregate, to make claims for a group small enough to produce some gain from the concessions made. A British prime minister who does 'something for the workers' probably doesn't do much and almost certainly does even less for his party. Doing something for the Scots, however, becomes an increasingly attractive and real option for Westminster (1975: 9).

Glazer and Moynihan see in ethnicity 'the emergence of a new social category as significant for the understanding of the present-day world as that of social class itself' (1975: 3). This is because 'one of the difficulties of social class as an organizing principle surely is that there just is not that much conflict of *norm* between most social classes', whereas 'Ethnic differences . . . *are* differences, or at least are seen as such' (1975: 15). Politicians have been rather alert to this too:

> The strategic efficacy of ethnicity as a basis for asserting claims against government has its counterpart in the seeming ease whereby government employs ethnic categories as a basis for distributing its rewards (Glazer and Moynihan. 1975: 10).

Australians may recall here the Grants to Community Agencies, the Australian Assistance Plan and government funding to ethnic research. In other words, the argument goes, class has simply not flourished as Marx said it would. Neither the liberal expectancy that ethnic differences would wither under modernisation, nor the radical expectancy that class interests would triumph over all else has materialised (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975: 7; Epstein, 1978: x). Instead, ethnicity has emerged in all its glory and that's where the action is.

There is support for these views in England. Cohen puts the matter quite simply:

> Classes are the figments of the imagination of sociologists. What actually exist are large numbers of interest groups of different scales and

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> political significance, which can be ranged on one continuum, from the most formally organised, to the most informally organised, with most of the groups falling in between, being partly formal and partly informal (1974a: 17).

For Jean Martin, the structures which form 'the most important bases of organization in Australian society' are not classes either, but more empirical entities such as political parties, trade unions, the churches, the universities and bodies like the A.M.A. (1972: 19). Martin also sees institutions such as the Telephone Interpreter Service and the Australian Assistance Plan as structural developments (1978: 50).

Some analysts suggest that ethnicity must be related to systems of stratification and power. Despres argues that ethnic groups become ranked because of competition, but ethnicity as a form of stratification must be distinguished from class (1975: 195). That is, he stresses competition rather than exploitation, even in colonial and post-colonial contexts. His comments read as if all ethnic groups were equally potentially powerful. Barth also refers to stratification, which in his scheme of things is about values and cultures: '. . . one may say that stratified poly-ethnic systems exist where groups are characterized by differential control of assets that are valued by all groups in the system' (1969: 27). He also declares that the sub-cultures of classes are more basic than their hierarchical ordering and that cultures of ethnic groups are integrated in a special way: 'they share certain general value orientations and scales, on the basis of which they can arrive at judgements of hierarchy' (1969: 27).

The theoretical predispositions behind statements like these are related to the explicit or implicit rejection of inequality as the central concern of sociology. Barth writes of choices as if everybody really had them. New elites ('the persons in the less industrialized [ethnic] groups with greater contact and more dependence on the goods and organizations of industrialized societies') may, he says

> accept a 'minority' status, accommodate to and seek to reduce their minority disabilities by encapsulating all cultural differentiae in sectors of non-articulation, while participating in the larger system of the industrialized group in the other sectors of activity (1969: 33).

Cohen is more explicit in arguing, after Parsons, that 'the central concern of sociological theory is with the phenomena of institutionalization' (1974a: 5). This permits him to equate the emergence of ethnicity in industrial societies with its upsurge in the Third World, and both with the conflict in Northern Ireland, and all three with the quaint customs of the London financial elite who wear top hats and chat about cricket when dealing with bankers (1974a: 98-100). London City men, he says,

> are socioculturally as distinct within British society as are the Hausa within Yoruba society. They are indeed as 'ethnic' as any ethnic group can be (1974b: xxi).

Glazer and Moynihan defuse the problem of social inequality by asserting its universality and stating that

> Men are not equal; neither are ethnic groups . . . If one is to describe the way the world is, one describes men everywhere ranked in systems of social stratification where one person is better or worse off than another. This is the empirical fact (1975: 11-12).

It is the same for group inequality: 'There seems no end to human ingenuity in thinking of characteristics that can be described as desirable or undesirable' and some ethnics are simply better than others at achieving the norms of the dominant group (1975, 12-14). Zubrzycki also takes inequality for granted and relies on values to avoid conflict: he says we can accept that a wide range of cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and class differences make Australian society pluralistic and

> assuming that this diversity is to exist under some form of central control, we need value consensus, and so the problem is how to organise the relationships between the various [ethnic] groups to enable each to maintain their own life while contributing to the good of society . . . (1977: 134).

Brass and van den Berghe are not quite so prepared to assume inequality. They argue that we must examine ethnic groups in the total context in which they exist and that the 'source of nearly all conflicts between ethnic groups are the political and economic inequalities, real or perceived, in access to resources' (1976: 200). But van den Berghe ignores the classical literature on class and simplistically elevates ethnicity to the same analytical level when he says

> I define an ethnic group, much as Marx did a class, that is, *both* objectively and subjectively. An ethnic group is one that shares a cultural tradition *and* has some degree of consciousness of being different from other such groups (1976: 242).

Some kinds of ethnic mobilisation can be compared with class action but, he warns,

> Any attempt to reduce class to ethnicity or ethnicity to class results in a serious distortion of reality. Indeed, an *a priori* theoretical position that one is more important than the other is untenable (1976: 244).

He tends to opt for ethnicity himself when he argues

> that class organization being based on the rather abstract notion of interest, is intrinsically more difficult to achieve than ethnic organization, based as it is on recognition of readily identifiable cultural symbols (1976: 251-2).

For an 'incorrigible empiricist' (a self description 1976: 242) ethnicity is a safer bet; you can see it whereas class is not really there at all.

The focus on cultural symbols is a typical anthropological one and is linked with the stress on the cognitive aspect of ethnicity. This was central to Barth's 1969 work on *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* and stems from the Weberian notion of *verstehen*. To Barth, ethnic groups are 'categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, and thus have the characteristic of organizing interaction between people' (1969: 10). Van den Berghe and other members of the Committee for Comparative Studies in Ethnicity and Nationality at the University of Washington also stress the subjective aspects of ethnicity: Their central theoretical focus

> has been on the conditions for the growth, persistence, and decline of ethnic self-consciousness and solidarity and for the political success of movements based upon such solidarity as societies move from the preindustrial to the post-industrial era (Brass and van den Berghe, 1976: 198).

Epstein focuses on self-consciousness even more; the concept of identity linked to ethnicity, he states, points in the direction of a wider study of the social anthropology of affect (1978: xv). According to Bennett, themes in the literature indicate that ethnicity is a strategy for acquiring resources, part of the distinctive characteristics of nations, and an identity phenomenon with two meanings: 'the search for the self and the definition of group boundaries' (1975: 4). Self and identity also feature in Jean Martin's argument favouring robust pluralism against emasculated pluralism in Australia. The robust kind, she says,

> acknowledges that cultural pluralism is dependent on some kind of structural pluralism and recognizes ethnic structures as forming one subsystem of roles and relations, among many others, through which individuals in our kind of society

> try to match their inner selves—their identity—with life-style and behaviour (1976: 26).

But once we introduce searches for self and identity it is open season and ethnicity can be about almost anything you care to name. Keyes, for instance, sees ethnic groups as types of descent groups 'whose members validate their claim to shared descent by pointing to cultural attributes which they believe they hold in common' (1976: 208). Van den Berghe says that ethnic sentiments are not only ubiquitous but have been so for millennia. He says modestly that he knew this long before the term ethnicity existed (1976: 242); during recent decades everyone else apparently found out. We now find ethnicity among new nations in Africa (Arens, 1976; Gandonu, 1978; Apte, 1978), in India (Gupta, 1978), in China (Tweddell, 1978), in South America (Siverts, 1978; Berdichewsky, 1978; Gandonu, 1978; Apte, 1978), in India Canada (Porter, 1975), with Amerindians further south (Trosper, 1976), among blacks in the U.S.A., among Catholics, Jews (Epstein, 1978) and Presbyterians (Neville, 1975). And of course it is there in Northern Ireland (Cohen, 1974b: xiv). Indeed, all that was previously categorised as linguistic, tribal, cultural or religious difference is now ethnicity; or in the U.S.S.R. amenable to ethnos theory (Arutiunov and Bromley, 1978; Porshnev, 1978). 'Language and religion are two common special cases of ethnicity', according to van den Berghe (1976: 242). Glazer and Moynihan agree: there is

> some legitimacy to finding that forms of identification based on social realities as different as religion, language, and national origin all have something in common, such that a new term is coined to refer to all of them—'ethnicity' (1975: 18).

Cohen simplifies matters even further by announcing that 'Ethnicity is essentially a form of interaction between culture groups operating within common social contexts' (1974b: xi). Wallman's definition is even more basic: ethnicity refers

> to the perception of group difference and so to the social boundaries between sections of a population. In this sense 'ethnic difference' is the recognition of a contrast between 'us' and 'them' (1977: 532).

It is no wonder that McKay and Lewins end up with a typology in which Basque sheepherders and Ethnic 'orphans' share one box, and in another we find Hausa traders, Tunisian Jews, Basque separatists and Italian-Catholics in Australia (1978: 423).

Not only can everything be reduced to ethnicity, but ethnicity becomes the moving force of history. Connor sees ethnicity behind the development of modern 19th century nation states: 'The political history of Europe from [1848] . . . until World War I is largely a tale of militant ethnic nationalism' (1973: 9). Van den Berghe seems to agree: nationalism is simply 'politicized ethnicity', a nation

> is an ethnic group that aspires to political autonomy and legitimizes its political demands on ethnic grounds. Imperialism is the conquest of one ethnic group by another . . . Colonialism is a special case of imperialism; it is overseas imperialism usually characterized by the technological superiority of the conqueror and the sending of settlers from the dominant ethnic group to the conquered territories (1976: 243).

With ethnicity we can reinterpret the world—and this brings some surprises. Switzerland does not pass, remaining in van den Berghe's words 'a loose conglomerate of "hill tribes" ' (1976: 247). Spain is all right; the Civil War was an ethnic event, as van den Berghe suggests, citing various nationals engaged in the hostilities (1976: 247-8).

Perhaps the most interesting function of ethnicity is to 'cause' decreases in income. Discussing the Celtic fringe of the British Isles, Hechter says that although class or functional cleavages have come to predominate over cultural distinctions in England, this process has been retarded in the Celtic fringe. This in turn is a

> function of the continued salience of cultural distinctions in the determination of income in Wales and parts of Scotland (1974: 1151).

Taking the county as his unit of analysis, he argues that where the dominant culture is all pervasive, namely, in the 'core' counties, Nonconformity led to higher incomes in 1951 and 1961, but in peripheral counties, which were culturally subordinate, Nonconformity led to lower incomes. In this context

> Nonconformity has traditionally served as the cultural marker of Celtic ethnicity. Therefore, in the peripheral and dissenting contexts, Nonconformity masks the effect of an ethnic factor—the strength of Welsh and Scottish ethnicity . . . (1974: 1176).

Surprisingly, Hechter makes no reference to mass conversions in the peripheral counties, but at least his article is a warning to any Nonconformist with some Celt in him.

There are even nastier notions lurking about. There is the possibility that ethnicity is a primordial characteristic. Hechter argues that the resurgence of ethnic political conflict in highly differentiated societies brings into question Geertz's idea that ethnicity is primordial (1974: 1154; Geertz, 1963). Van den Berghe asserts quite categorically that ethnicity is 'both primordial and highly changeable' (1976: 243). Keyes is even more certain: ethnic groups have a 'primordial' quality, namely 'that of descent which is given by birth' (1976: 210). Connor even wonders whether one should contemplate

> an ethnic imperative, as others have claimed to detect a universal imperative based on such diverse factors as territory, economic self-interest, or the sex urge (1973: 2).

Unlike Barth who earlier stated that ethnic identity is imperative (1969: 17), Connor decides it is not because ethnicity is too recent a phenomenon. But Glazer and Moynihan remain uncertain about this primordiality. They note Dahrendorf's reference to the 'refeudalization' of society, i.e., 'the return of ascribed as against achieved characteristics as determinants of social stratification', and they ponder whether ethnicity is not part of this wider development, a 'more fundamental source of stratification' (1975: 16-17). They realise it is extremely powerful because it advances interests by harnessing them to affective ties. Yet, the idea that ethnicity might be so basic troubles them (as well it might a Jew and an Irishman) and they feel obliged to say they personally do not celebrate it. Rather, like van den Berghe, they warn that official recognition by the state of too much ethnicity will only lead to further discrimination and the creation of additional ethnic problems. Bennett concurs (1975: 10). With all this agonising about the primordiality of ethnicity, it is only a matter of time before the sociobiologists find the ethnic gene.

. . . .

None of this literature explains why 'ethnicity' has erupted, nor why there has been such an academic and governmental preoccupation with it in comparison with the obsession with 'race' a century ago. Most of it does not even register the parallel, yet it is a striking one. Too much of the material is bogged down in empirical description of the culture of the ethnics themselves, including their self-definitions in all manner of social, political and economic circumstances.

In so far as writers recognise the extent to which ethnicity, as a system of beliefs about identity, can be used as a resource (see Wallman, 1977; Despres, 1975), they recognise that ethnicity can be considered as ideology in the first sense I mentioned earlier. But because so many interpretations go little beyond an account of behavioural norms and the institutionalisation of social action that invokes origins and cultural differences, these interpretations themselves tend to reproduce the participants' ideology. Van den Berghe seems aware of this when he notes that

> At the ideological level, this swing in intellectual perception [of the revival of ethnicity] was accompanied by a massive legitimation of ethnic and racial separatism (1976: 242), but he does not explore the implications of his observation, nor examine what lies behind this legitimation.

These analyses not only ignore the historical and structural relations that produce such behaviour, but they also depend on some extraordinary premises and lead to some bizarre conclusions. For instance, how analytically useful is it to accept inequality as 'empirical fact' in societies like America and Australia when census data and numerous other studies (e.g. Collins, 1975) reveal both the low status occupational and industrial destination of so many immigrants and indigenous ethnics, and the role they play in capitalist relations of production? What are the implications of labelling together both Aborigines and non-Anglo-Saxon (white) immigrants as 'ethnics'? This may denote their minority status but one undoubtedly unintended consequence of this classification is that it tends to obscure the *separate* experience of destruction and exploitation Aborigines have endured under whites. Or, what is the point of a typology that lumps Basque separatists with Italian-Catholics in Australia? It can tell us little about either except at a very superficial level.

Simply to reject the positions outlined above is not to go far. To consider their unintended consequences is another matter. In all cases the premises or conclusions obscure the actual structural and historical relations the ethnic groups are, or have been, engaged. As an alternative I suggest that students of ethnicity bear in mind at least three areas of investigation. First, there is empirical observation: here, in dealing with what people do and say we are concerned with institutionalised behaviour. At this level it is clear that humans commonly distinguish themselves from others and draw boundaries by invoking descent, blood, race, religion, language, ethnic background, or some attribute that asserts roots, origins, sameness of one kind against difference in others. All these cultural practices provide symbolic or rhetorical devices for conceiving identity, asserting consciousness of it for pursuing common interests, or for excluding others from social combinations. To label all these cultural practices 'ethnicity', and then use this 'variable' as an explanatory concept is to link historically and structurally disparate phenomena. Thus we get the conflation of Hausa traders in Yoruba society with the London financial elite: ethnicity allegedly explains both (see Cohen, 1974b: xxi).

This theoretical strategy cannot explain for instance the difference between the Christian religion as a cultural force during the Middle Ages and Islam today. Nor can it explain why 'race' was a powerful and culturally acceptable ideology in Australia one hundred years ago whereas racism is discredited today and ethnicity celebrated instead. To argue that ethnicity is a variable of the same kind as class in today's world does not get us far either; it simply forces the analysis back on the self-definition of the groups in question, which motors a fruitless search for a theory of ethnicity to set against our theories of class (cf. Brass and van den Berghe, 1976: 200; Glazer and Moynihan, 1975: 25-6). To rely on self-definition in the first place results in idealist explanations and confuses social reality with its cognition (Robbins, 1975: 287).

Ideas about origins or identity *per se* do not prescribe the solidarity of those who claim them; they merely provide a set of symbols. The problem in ethnic studies is 'to understand how and when such claims come to be made and accepted or rejected' (Freedman, 1976: 183). As Wolpe argues, to treat ethnic groups as

> *the* salient groups in the society has the consequence of excluding from the analysis precisely those other structures and relations (in particular the mode of production, the class structure, and class relations) which are necessary to an explanation of the nature and relationships of those groups . . . to base an analysis on the criteria (race, religion, etc.) by which groups define themselves and the conflict between them is to take as given precisely what requires explanation. For what needs to be accounted for is why these particular groups come into existence and into conflict with one another. This requires an analysis of the conditions which generate particular conflicts and which affect their nature and intensity (1975: 238).

Those analysts who see ethnicity replacing class, or who give to ethnicity an analytical weight equal to class, seem to forget that Marx suggested another and more complex way of charting the relationship between them. In studying social transformations and conflict, he quite explicitly distinguished between the material transformations of the economic conditions of production and the legal, political, religious or cultural—'in short ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out' (1970: 21). Or as Thompson put it, class-consciousness is the way in which class experiences are handled in cultural terms:

> embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms . . . We can see a logic in the responses of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predicate any law (1968: 10).

The institutionalisation of ethnicity, then, must be considered in the context of the social totality of which it is a part, which brings me to the second important area of investigation, the historical and structural.

In the present context it is important to distinguish various historical instances in which race and ethnicity have emerged, and how both are linked to structural relations of dominance and subjection such as class. To state some linkages very briefly: during colonial and imperial expansion and the extended reproduction of capital, European powers exploited the resources and people in their overseas possessions and justified this by racist ideologies (see Benedict, 1942; Arendt, 1958; Cox, 1970; Beteille, 1977; Johnstone, 1976; van den Berghe, 1967; Rex, 1970). Systems of belief in which non-Europeans were depicted as inferior, childish and hence deserving of their subordinate economic, social, legal and political position provide examples today of ideology as a system of false or illusory ideas. Yet, while overt racism was hegemonic, and intellectuals contributed with their scientific proofs, these systems of false ideas satisfactorily explained the superiority of whites and made social life coherent for most (white) people.

At this stage it is important to ask: if racist practices and ideologies served ruling class interests one hundred years ago, why have circumstances changed so that today racism is banned legally in countries like the U.S.A., the United Kingdom and Australia, and multi-culturalism, pluralism and ethnicity promoted instead? I will argue that changing circumstances in the ongoing structural relations between capital and labour have had consequences for national and international political relations, and have fostered new cultural manifestations, institutions and forms. In the process, hegemony has had to be recreated.

Briefly, in the United States by the second half of the present century, institutionalised racism became too costly both at home and abroad as negro labour provided workers in a period of enormous industrial expansion, as many negroes moved up the social system, and as capital sought investments and markets overseas. Negro soldiers were conspicuous in Korea and Vietnam, and it is no accident that the civil rights movement erupted during the 1960s (see Wilson, 1978).

Across the Atlantic, Britain was in no position to keep her colonies after World War II but, in her withdrawal, introduced workers from former possessions to fuel her post-war reconstruction. As Sivanandan comments, colonialism had perverted the economy of the colonies to its own end; it had drained their wealth into the coffers of the metropolitan country and had left them at independence with a large labour force and no capital with which to make that labour productive. As all the capital was in the 'mother country' that is where the labour went (1976: 348). Coloured labour in Britain currently does the jobs whites do not want; coloured people live in substandard housing and send their children to overcrowded and poorly serviced schools (Rex and Moore, 1967; Rose, 1969; Deakin *et al.*, 1970; Smith, 1977). But overt race disrimination is not profitable financially or politically, as the British White Paper on Racial Discrimination (1975) made clear. Race riots are socially disruptive; strikes by coloured workers upset the Social Contract (Sivanandan, 1976). Institutional racism has had to be banned as it was with the Race Relations Act (1976). Co-operation rather than exclusion has become the official catch-cry. Instead of the lesser breeds without the law there is a policy of integrating coloureds vertically in the system.

National businesses and multi-nations have located plants and created new markets in new states. Where 19th century colonialism and imperialism required racism to justify exploitation, capital in the late 20th century allies with the native bourgeoisie and recruits local personnel. Overt racism is a handicap; it is abhorred and, under the cloak of liberal humanism, the elites of the Third World are softened up for investment and the further reproduction of capital (Sivanandan, 1974: 5). What was once, for instance, the African (negroid) race, divided into many tribes, is now fractured into many new states and new social divisions as 'modernisation' and 'development' intrude. The phenomenon we call ethnicity in post-colonial situations is related to the proliferation of internal interest groups mobilising after the demise of colonial power (see Gandonu, 1978; Arens, 1978).

In Australia, circumstances have also changed since last century. A little more than fifty years after we excluded non-whites we began recruiting their skills and abandoned the White Australia policy. Meanwhile, with an acute labour shortage after the war we instituted a programme of planned immigration which brought thousands of European foreigners to our shores. As these people and their children settled, became numerous enough to affect elections and, in the case of some who moved up the social system, have a say in policy decisions, we too have banned discrimination against them and promoted multiculturalism and ethnicity instead. In turn, this legitimation of ethnic boundaries has political effects of its own. 'Ethnicity' has an ideological role quite independent of the ethnics' ideas about themselves and their identity. This is the third area of which we need to be aware.

Put very bluntly, I am arguing that where racist behaviour and ideologies were convenient to ruling class interests one hundred years ago, the apparent opposite—the promotion of ethnicity—performs a similar role today. The empirical manifestations of ethnicity (people asserting their origins, rights, identities, having festivals, etc.) in countries such as the U.S.A., Britain and Australia have occurred at a time when ethnic/cultural boundaries traverse occupational and class ones. This has resulted from international labour migration, permitted and promoted by nation states and capital. These material conditions point to the cultural component of ethnicity rather than to its instinctual, primordial or structural nature. In certain places ethnicity, then, is about the proletarianisation of labour. The coloureds in Britain illustrated this when immigrants formed Indian Workers' Associations (see John, 1969), when Asian workers went out on strike against Imperial Typewriters (*Race Today*, July 1974: 201-205; March 1975: 60-64) and at Grunwick (*Race & Class* XIX/1, 1977: 69-73; XIX/3, 1978: 289-294). The migrants strike at Ford's Broadmeadow plant in Victoria in 1973 and the impetus it gave to the Migrant Workers Conferences provide further illustration (see Collins, 1975: 126). The Kru in Monrovia would be another example (Parkin, 1974: 145), as would Indian ethnicity in Guyana in contrast to 'Indianness' in Fiji (Jayawardena, 1978:8). In other places, class mobility and aspirations for higher status manifest themselves in ethnic behaviour: the Sikhs on the north-coast of N.S.W. who put their turbans on again, after seeing many high status professionals from Sydney and Melbourne wearing them, illustrates this (de Lepervanche, 1978).

Ethnic behaviour everywhere has to be associated with patterns of economic, political and cultural dominance. The ethnic behaviour of non-Anglo-Saxon minorities in countries such as the U.K., U.S.A. and Australia is an expression of their consciousness of Anglo-Saxon hegemony. Depending on their class positions this consciousness will be expressed for instance as industrial unrest, i.e. as working class consciousness; in civil rights movements and demonstrations against discrimination, which usually include in addition to workers some middle-class people oppressed by status alienation. Alternatively, this consciousness may appear as the assertion of social honour, pride and cultural exclusiveness: some of the Scandinavians in the U.S.A. (see Eisenstadt, 1954: 249) and the French in Australia (see Rosemberg, 1978) provide examples. But in all these cases, although the expression of social consciousness is in a cultural (ethnic) idiom against Anglo-Saxon cultural dominance, it must be remembered that Anglo-Saxon hegemony is historically grounded in class domination and in specific relations between capital and introduced immigrant labour. The upward social mobility of particular ethnic groups and individuals notwithstanding, this phenomenon of ethnicity in recent years has been an aspect of class structures and the conflicts within them. In other words, the institutionalisation of ethnicity is a response to the contradiction between the struggle of resistance by non-Anglo-Saxons and the incorporation of ethnic difference within the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture.

Therefore, although the celebration of ethnic diversity and difference by governments and academics may reduce a certain amount of cultural prejudice, this promotion of ethnicity, particularly when it is elevated to sociological theory, masks conflicting class interests and the nature of class relations. Under the umbrella of ethnicity or pluralism, individuals are conceived as having deep roots in one community but several allegiances in social life at large; class appears simply as one among many ties, and society is defined in terms of a multiplicity of cross-cutting linkages.

To make a class analysis of race and ethnic relations in Australia is no simple matter. As Curthoys and Markus have pointed out:

> There is no simple identification of a particular racial or ethnic group in its entirety with a particular class position or of racist ideology with either capital or labour . . . (1978: xv).

I agree, but I think we should persist in trying to chart the connections empirically, structurally and ideologically. Unless we do, our productions on ethnicity may end up rather like those late 19th century comments on race, and we will have played our part in contributing to hegemony. As Williams notes, hegemony does not merely passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own, i.e. by counter-hegemonic practices (1977: 112-113). We have a choice. There are in fact no ethnics; there are only ways of seeing people as ethnics.[7]

FOOTNOTES

1. See for instance the letter sent in 1977 from the Premier of N.S.W. to various Vice-Chancellors and Professors concerning grants to encourage research on ethnic studies.
2. These businesses were listed in the 1978 Sydney telephone directory.
3. Dr Paolo Totaro is concerned to see Scottish kilts recognised as 'ethnic dress', according to Column 8, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 December 1979.
4. I am grateful to Timothy Murray for pointing out that this article was probably written by James Hunt. (See, Timothy Andrew Murray: 'Aspects of Polygenism in the Works of Robert Knox and James Hunt', B. A. (Hons) thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1976.
5. There are illustrations of this in Herbert Spencer's sociology. See, *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative*, Vol. 1, London, Williams and Norgate, 1901, pp. 351-370. General overviews of racist writings appear in R. Benedict, 1942; H. Arendt, 1958 and P. Sorokin, 1928. Not all anthropologists were, of course, racist in the sense that I have been discussing. Some, like Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski, opposed racist behaviour and thinking.
6. There are exceptions, e.g. Edward Robbins, 1975; S. Allen and C. Smith: 'Race and Ethnicity in Class Formation: A Comparison of Asian and West Indian Workers', pp. 39-53 in F. Parkin (ed.), *The Social Analysis of Class Structure*, London, Tavistock, 1974. Peter Hinton has also commented on the empirical and anti-class emphasis in the Ethnicity literature. See, P. Hinton: 'Where Have the New Ethnicists Gone Wrong?' (Paper circulated in the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney); P. Hinton: 'Do the Karen Really Exist', forthcoming in W. Bhruksasri and John McKinnon (eds), *Highlanders of Thailand*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press.
7. With apologies to Raymond Williams, 1977: 289.

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2

Multiculturalism and education policy

M. Kalantzis & B. Cope

Source: M. Kalantzis & B. Cope, 'Multiculturalism and education policy', in G. Bottomley & M. de Lepervanche (eds), *Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Australia*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp. 82–97.

The word 'multiculturalism' was all but unheard of a decade ago. Now it is bandied about as a rationale for citizenship, as a label for some types of television, as a 'welfare' category and as a major area of educational policy and school curricula. Our interest in this paper is education and curricula, but multiculturalism cannot be understood except in its broader historical context—and what a peculiar context it is.

Multiculturalism appears to have begun with Grassby during the Whitlam years 1972–75, but developed as a product of the Fraser government of 1975–83. Its peculiarity is two-sided. On the one hand, it was the only major new area of social policy for a government whose monetarist soul demanded retrenchment in the face of recession, and a contracting welfare state in the interests of enlarging the private sector. On the other hand, multiculturalism was a new word which didn't cost too much or do too much. It looked and felt like a radically new social direction, but when we look back, it often seems to have been more hot air than effective social reform.

At first glance, the policy change from Snedden, the Liberal Minister for Immigration in 1968, to MacPhee, the Liberal Minister for Immigration in 1982, seems dramatic. According to Snedden,

> We must have a single culture. If migration implies multi-cultural activities within Australian society, then it was not the type Australia wanted. I am quite determined we should have a mono-culture with everyone living the same way, understanding each other and sharing the same aspirations. We do not want pluralism. (*Australian* 26 July 1968)

According to MacPhee,

> Acquiring Australian Citizenship should not require suppression of one's cultural heritage or identity. Rather, the act of becoming a citizen is—symbolically and actually—a process of bringing one's own gift of language, culture and traditions to enrich the already diverse fabric of Australian society. Our vision of a multicultural society shares with our concept of citizenship, a strong emphasis on building a cohesive and harmonious society which is all the more tolerant and outward-looking because of the diversity of its origins. (Ministerial Statement 6 May 1982)

Though dramatic, this change was far from simple.

Ethnic politics and cultural pluralism

There have been two often contradictory prongs to multiculturalism: 'ethnic' politics which attempts to right social disadvantage for migrants, and cultural pluralism. We cannot attempt to account adequately for the rise of ethnic politics in a paragraph, but its logic is crucial to an understanding of the processes of multiculturalism as they filter through to social arenas such as education. Ethnic politics in part began with the sheer weight of non English-speaking migrant numbers and their relative social disadvantage. From this base-point, it became complex and distorted. The growth of organisations like the Ethnic Communities' Councils came with the rise to social success of a small number of articulate 'community leaders' angered by what they perceived to be the barriers to social mobility for those of non English-speaking background—prejudice, unrecognised professional job qualifications, and so on. Characteristically, they saw their non English-speaking background as a hindrance to social success in Australia, despite being political refugees to the 'free-world', their overseas educational qualifications and their socialised expectations. So 'ethnic politics' has not been necessarily the voice of the disadvantaged majority of non English-speaking migrants, but the voice of an atypical few.

Complicating matters further, ethnic politics evoked a response from government. Perhaps this was a cynical judgement about how to catch the 'migrant vote'. Nevertheless, multicultural social policy was funded. Part of the strength of ethnic politics was the fact that the government was paying for it, even to the extent of supporting a semi-official ideologue like Zubrzycki, who sums up its thrust well:

> What we believe Australia should be working towards is not a oneness, but a unity, not a similarity, but a composite, not a melting pot, but a voluntary bond of dissimilar people sharing a common political and institutional structure. . . [Multiculturalism means] that the spokesman for every culture should be heard, that they should have a chance to put their case in community debate, that they should be taken seriously in high places. Among the groups, that are 'in' (e.g. trade unions, employers, the established churches, the AMA) this dialogue goes on all the time; some groups win more often than others, but there is constant give and take, compromise and re-thinking. *Multiculturalism means ethnic communities getting 'into the act'*: (Australian Ethnic Affairs Council 1977:17–18.) (Original emphasis.)

In schools, the implications of ethnic politics might include specialist teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL), the valuing and accreditation of 'community' languages, bilingual teaching, the employment of teachers with overseas qualifications, and socio-cultural programmes trying to foster positive self-images in children of non English-speaking background. The fundamental rationale is reform aimed at giving migrants 'a fair go'. It is their 'migrantness' that has held them back. A common consequence of this is so admit, perhaps, status differences but to ignore, for the purposes of multiculturalism, wider social patterns of class and gender positioning and thereby to confuse the processes in schools which make or break the likelihood of social and career success.

P.W. Matthews, head of multicultural education in the New South

Wales Department of Education until 1981, was a clear exponent of this view. He drew up a model of Australian society which looked like a pyramid, representing its unquestioned hierarchical structure. At the bottom was a big band of 'lower socio-economic status', above which was a smaller band of 'middle socio-economic status', surmounted by a small pinnacle of 'high socio-economic status'. The politics of reform is then the politics of equality of opportunity. Migrants should not have to take on Anglo-Saxon Celtic mannerisms and habits to be socially mobile. And migrants, when they arrive, should not have to suffer the indignity of being slotted into an inappropriate 'socio-economic status' (Matthews 1981). The aim of such a politics of open opportunity was summed up by the Commonwealth Education Portfolio. Ideally, 'each group would have members distributed over the socio-economic range so that each individual would have opportunities for both upward, downward and lateral social mobility' (1978:18). In other words, the odds in the lottery of social mobility had to be, in all fairness, the same for all groups.

The problem with this view is that it is naive about its own ideal of social mobility. Class mobility is not made of positive self-images and attitudes. Merely respecting people of non English-speaking background for what they are will not make them more socially mobile. 'Migrantness' and poor 'intercultural communication' are heavily overlaid by the logistics of social class. 'Opportunities' do not immediately present themselves once the specific characteristics of being 'ethnically different' are no longer perceived as a barrier. Even when the perceptions become friendlier, the structures and relations of class and gender are still there.

Ethnic politics, however complex its origins and however confused its intentions, is a politics of liberal social reform. As such, it is not without its merits. Particularly in the case of specialist ESL teaching, there has been a genuine attempt to right the specific disadvantage suffered by children of non English-speaking background. Class is certainly not everything. In schools, children of non English-speaking background do suffer specific disadvantages. Multicultural policy in education prescribes a better society, based on an understanding that some social groups are disadvantaged. Cultural patterns, viewed by ethnic politics as group life-chances and wider structural relations, need to be changed.

The other prong to multiculturalism, which has also found its way down to education policy and school curricula, is cultural pluralism. Propagated essentially by theorists and bureaucrats, cultural pluralism does almost the opposite of ethnic politics. It does not set out to reform society; it merely wishes to describe society as it is in order to celebrate its diversity. A key to understanding cultural pluralism is to try to work out just what 'culture' in Australia we can be pleasantly 'multi' about. The culture in multiculturalism must be those things which 'already exist' in diversity; the 'interesting' and the 'colourful', personal 'lifestyles' and 'relationships', 'identifications' and 'points of view'. These belong to 'the essentially private domain of family and religious belief' (Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs 1982:16). This world is also the realm of 'folk art...dancing, music, craft and literature' (AEAC 1978:6).

Anthropologists would not like such a narrow definition of culture.

It is pragmatically narrow: culture is no more and no less than that which we can be happily 'multi' about. Italian peasant village life and Polish communism are not 'culture' because we could not really have either in Australia—no-one could suggest we be *this* multicultural—but spagnetti and polka are culture, without a doubt. At this point, multiculturalism becomes neither a serious area of social reform policy nor an intellectually worthwhile curriculum activity.

We have argued that ethnic politics and cultural pluralism are at odds, but there are no opposing camps. The two views almost invariably exist simultaneously. On the one hand, the focus is on getting into the same cultural act as the dominant groups. On the other, the focus is on maintaining the diversity (which often, and perhaps conveniently, happens not to be a diversity of social equals). There are *de facto* arguments for structural assimilation without tears (with the cultural imperatives and ethos that accompany this). Yet, there is an ideology of pluralism, implacably hostile to any suggestion that assimilation might be going on. There is a view that migrants are 'disadvantaged' and need to learn new cultural skills which open up mobility opportunities, but elsewhere the same thing is called 'diversity' which is to be cherished and left alone. For some, social prescription is a rationale for reform. For others, social description is a celebration of what is.

Multicultural education rests on a tenuous link between these two contradictory tendencies. The old 'migrant problem'—the 'disadvantaged' are always a bit of a problem—is solved by defining 'them' as culturally different so we can respect and enjoy the difference. The barrier was 'our' attitude and the pluralist ethnic will solve that. Cultural pluralism is the do-nothing-except-be-nice solution to the problem of ethnic politics.

The Australian Schools Commission

The argument just outlined is crucial to understanding the history of multiculturalism in the Schools Commission, which has turned out to be one of the main vehicles of multiculturalism, particularly through its funding patterns. The Australian Schools Commission was established in a spirit of reform and founded on the belief that education is a medium of progressive social reform. The Whitlam government saw that one of its roles was to finance experimentation in education in its quest for a more equitable and just society. The Schools Commission's language of reform in its first years of operation, however, was completely insensitive to what would later become the politics of multiculturalism.

The Karmel Report, which became the basis for the establishment of the Schools Commission, argued that the reforming role of the school lies in the process of socialisation and the passage of the child into social responsibility and social participation. The problem is that

> education...has proved to be an inadequate means of changing patterns of social stratification or of initiating all young people into society. Central to...the special functions of schools...[is] the acquisition of skills and knowledge [and] initiation into the cultural heritage...More intensive and varied efforts will be required in some schools and for some children to enable them to acquire the basic skills necessary to participate in the

> society. . . [The Interim Committee] supports their right to be initiated into the culture through a comprehensive core curriculum. . . (Australian Schools Commission 1973:2.17, 2.21, 3.23)

Revealing in the Karmel Report is its use of the word 'culture' to refer primarily to an implicity homogeneous Australian culture. The Report's understanding of the relationship between class and socio-economic disadvantage and its reform programme are then based on a cultural analysis of the situation.

Schools often only compound the cultural circumstances of disadvantage. The Schools Commission set out to do what it could about this, but there are serious problems with its analysis, in terms both of its division of cultural deficiency and adequacy, and and of its view that the disadvantage of class position can be fixed culturally—through better teaching, nicer school environments or more adequate initiation into the rites and motives of conventional social success. Our point here is not so much to criticise this theory of social reform as to draw a parallel with the logic of ethnic politics—despite differences of terminology and the newfound sensitivities of multiculturalism (which, for example, forbade ideas about there being any 'common culture' to which schools had 'initiating' responsibilites). Social reform was to be achieved in part through the removal of cultural barriers to mobility. However, the Karmel Report also contained the logic of cultural pluralism. Although there is only one weak reference to multicultural neighbourhoods (not a multicultural Australian society) and the indigenous culture of the Aborigines, 'choice', 'diversity' and 'community involvement' were key terms of the Commission's reform programme. These would later fit the project of cultural pluralism perfectly.

By the time of the Report for the 1982–84 triennium, full-blown multiculturalism had arrived. This was partly because the autonomy of the Schools Commission had been curtailed by the Liberal-Country Party government, and partly because it had been given a range of tasks through the Galbally Report recommendations. So, by 1981,

> The plurality of Australian society is demonstrated by the variety of values, lifestyle, political viewpoints, beliefs and the roles which operate. This holds true in a racial and ethnic sense: while Anglo-Celtic values and traditions continue to dominate Australian society, the social composition of Australia continues to change in terms of numbers and representation of different national groups. (Australian Schools Commission 1981:2.8)

Multiculturalism is 'an attitude of mind' and should become 'a cornerstone in our society' (Australian Schools Commission 1981:1.32, 2.8).

A complex but profound shift has now occurred in the meaning the Schools Commission gives to 'culture'. Whereas in the earlier reports the dominant culture in Australia had been a monolith in which groups were related by relative advantage (successful initiation) or disadvantage (unsuccessful initiation: failure to gain a participating role), now the dominant culture is Anglo-Celtic against which minority cultures are to be perceived and respected as equals. This move to a theory of cultural pluralism, although prefigured in the original ideas about choice, diversity and community involvement, marks a break. From a programme of cultural reform (whatever its inadequacies), the

Schools Commission has now moved to a theory of cultural relativism—finding culture in so far as it can be plural and relative, and celebrating its diversity. This involved narrowing the meaning of the word; for example, it is only the Anglo-Celticness of the dominant culture which is equal and relative to the minority cultures. It also involved de-emphasising the cultural prerequisites of success and power in Australian society.

The 'migrant presence' in education

To this point we have traced patterns of development in the ideology of multiculturalism and their refraction through the Schools Commission. We will now, briefly, go back one step, to sketch the impact of the 'migrant presence' in education and the socio-economic context of the arrival of multiculturalism.

Investigation into the migrant situation in schools had not been deemed necessary prior to the 1960s, as it was considered that once migrants arrived in Australia they would assimilate happily. The few reports that were written suggested that, on this front, the immigration programme was succeeding. Indeed, the Report into the Progress and Assimilation of Migrant Children (Aust. Immigration Advisory Council 1960) claimed that they were doing better educationally than Australian born. By the 1970s, however, this glib optimism had receded.

One statistic seen as symptomatic was that of settler arrival and departure rates. Particular alarm arose when not only settler arrival figures declined but settler departure rates increased. By the late 1970s recruiting campaigns were trying to draw migrants from the Middle East, mainly from Lebanon and Turkey, but something still had to be done about departure rates. The 11.6 per cent loss of the 1947–61 period doubled to 23.2 per cent during the 1961–71 period, jumped again to a record 53.7 per cent in 1971–73, and remained high at 38.7 per cent for the 1973–76 period. There are a number of complex reasons for these departure rates, including the improved economic conditions in Europe which enticed many to return to their countries of origin.

This was a dilemma because, despite all the cosmetic shifts in name (from assimilation, to integration, to multiculturalism), the historic function of migration remained—to supply particular labour markets as part of the project of industrial economic growth, and to defend Australia against communism and the north. The departure figures were particularly alarming given Australia's commitment to social investment in migrants (unlike the guestworkers of Western Europe, for example). Not only was labour lost, but also longer-term investment in schooling, social welfare and so on.

At the same time, a plethora of investigations and reports began to 'discover' that neither assimilation nor integration had worked well (cf. Martin 1975) Many migrants had evidently not experienced the success or integration the policies had promised. The vicious inequalities of class and gender had, for whole groups, made a mockery of policy.

In schools, the sheer numbers of migrants of non English-speaking backgrounds, particularly in some areas in the major cities, raised problems that could not be ignored. The increasing number of children from non English-speaking backgrounds placed a burden on schools and teachers for which they were not adequately equipped.

The 1967 Department of Immigration survey recommended that the federal government take an interest in Child Migrant Education as well as Adult Migrant Education. The Child Migrant Education Programme was initated in 1971. Its purpose was essentially to promote English-language teaching. Migrant youth, 'Australian citizens of tomorrow', could not be handichapped by their inability to speak English. The Reports of the Survey of Child Migrant Education in Schools of High Migrant Density (Australian Department of Education 1974 and 1975) highlighted the problem migrant children had in learning English and the association this had with inadequate facilities, materials and teacher-training. The 1975 Report made wide-ranging recommendations to state and federal departments of education. Along with an emphasis on the need for successful teaching of English, it suggested the introduction of multicultural dimensions to the curriculum, maintenance of community languages, bilingual education programmes and the retraining of teachers in order to sensitise them to migrant issues. The de Lemos (1975) study of the educational achievements of migrant children confirmed the need for these recommendations to be acted upon. This study noted marked differences between children of non English and English-speaking backgrounds on verbal but not on non-verbal or arithmetic tests. It concluded that the factors relating to performance were not therefore ones of 'ability' but associated with English-language skills.

This new awareness arose with the progressive movement in education. Its emphasis on equality, compensation for disadvantage and catering for difference naturally suited it to the concerns of minority groups. It was no coincidence that the Schools Commission displayed a convergence of concern about the position of migrants with progressive concern about disadvantage generally. But, as we have argued, the convergence was complex and contradictory, all the more so because multiculturalism did not come of age until the Fraser period.

Labor, in the years before 1975, had shown a new concern for migrants as part of its reforming ethos. Al Grassby, Minister for Immigration until May 1974, put his particular mark on the emerging policy, but his perspective was not so much the variety of multiculturalism as, in keeping with Whitlam's unabashed republican nationalist sentiments, the ideals of 'the family of the nation' (Grassby 1973a, 1973b, 1974). Against this, from its trade-union perspective, Labor has always had a more ambivalent attitude towards migration than its conservative opponents. This ambivalence is emerging more markedly now in the Hawke administration. In education matters, it is being reflected in a coolness towards multiculturalism, relative to 'new' issues perceived to be of greater importance, such as the use of computers.

Multiculturalism in school and in policy

How has the ideology of multiculturalism been put into schools? We plan to discuss this question through a brief description of what has happened in five Sydney schools and an analysis of the New South Wales Department of Education's 1983 Multicultural Education Policy Statement and its supporting documents.

School A is in Sydney's inner western suburbs and 87 per cent of its kindergarten enrolments did not speak English as their main language in their pre-school years. The school knows it has a problem, though it prefers to perceive things positively as a 'challenge'. Every classroom is regarded as an ESL situation, although most of the teachers have not had ESL training. Italian is taught as a 'community' language because 30 per cent of the children are from Italian backgrounds, but lessons have not been continuous, as special multicultural funding has been irregular. There have been one or two lessons per week, for periods of six to twelve months, and these also include children of non Italian-language background who, in the time, are taught a few words of polite interchange. Then, to incorporate the 'community', a good portion of the year is spent working up to a 'national day' (one year it was a 'national week') of festivities, food and dance. This takes up a considerable amount of preparation time (most afternoons for more than a term) and much effort on the part of the teachers. The time is accounted for as social studies and as fostering the formation of school spirit and character.

This overwhelming emphasis on multiculturalism as simply a matter of attitudes, feelings and personal development has been to the detriment of specialised and intensive language teaching. The consequence is that children from the school do not gain entrance to the local selective high school and, more generally, schooling is playing a negative role in structuring social outcomes. The problem is not the failure of individual teachers, but the school's interpretation of multiculturalism and a lack of institutional support for the necessary intensive and specialised teaching.

Sadly, parents with high expectations have become disillusioned and have frequently blamed the teachers, despite their self-conscious gestures to the 'community'. The principal at one point came to believe that her efforts had been received ungratefully; she could not understand the resentment that some of the more articulate parents expressed. The multicultural festivity brought in the 'community' to some extent but, against perceived school 'results', the niceness wore rather thin. The time spent in preparation was, as often as not, perceived by parents as time wasted which should have been spent in class. By the end of the year, many of the teachers privately sympathised with this view. And ironically, the dance and costume displays produced moments of chauvinism, as differences had been created which the students had not seen to be so obvious previously. Finally, the 'community' language teaching neither contributed significantly to the linguistic-cognitive development of the students of Italian background nor became a serious subject area for other students. Now school A is reconsidering multiculturalism, but without much optimism.

School B is on the outskirts of Sydney and serves a 'community' which includes many market gardeners. So, much of its language, social science and maths programming is centred on keeping a garden in the school grounds. The rationale is that if students are likely to follow in their parents' footsteps, their curriculum has to be 'relevant' to these needs. This is founded on a pedagogical truism, that students will learn best what they are interested in and from what is familiar and everyday. But it could be argued that catering to perceived community needs can reproduce structures of class and inequality. Besides, it might be a gross projection to assume that the market-gardening community wants its children to become market gardeners in preference to becoming doctors and lawyers.

The sentiments of School C were similar, and equally problematic. This is a girls' high school with students of mixed linguistic backgrounds. It has put a strong emphasis on 'community' languages because it was thought important for the girls to maintain continuity of family tradition. A liason officer was asked to facilitate this. Multicultural cooking and craftwork took on a high profile as it was observed that, 'realistically', these girls would probably assume traditional domestic roles. Responding to perceived community needs, the school was reproducing conventional gender roles.

School D, also a girls' school, is responding quickly to the curriculum diversification happening at the moment. In shaping an alternative School Certificate curriculum, it is offering numerous courses in ethnic studies and multiculturalism, but without adequate resources and expertise. A nearby private boys' school, with a tougher view towards social outcomes, would not countenance any movement away from a traditional curriculum.

School E, a secondary school in the innner-western suburbs, draws about 80 per cent of its students from non English-speaking backgrounds, although most of these students have undertaken all of their schooling in Australia. None the less, there are serious English-language problems, visible as underachievement though not immediately recognisable in playground banter. These could easily have been mis-registered as lack of 'ability' and become an excuse to scale curriculum offerings down to 'soft options'. Instead, the school has integrated language and social science offerings in years 7 and 8, and has extended time allocation to these areas. The language work is intensive and structured to meet the particular needs of the students. The related social science work is multicultural in the fullest sense, covering values, socialisation, culture and gender in a fashion strongly oriented to concept and language development. Multiculturalism is viewed as the study not of pretty or traditional differences, but of how all people are formed, in various contexts and various ways, as encultured beings. Together, the language and social science curricula set out to develop linguistic-cognitive capacities. In addition, Italian and Arabic are taught as mainstream academic subjects.

We selected these five schools for thumbnail portraits because they are typical of the successes and failures of multiculturalism at the school level. Another perspective to multiculturalism in education is revealed through examining multicultural education policy. To a large extent, multicultural education in schools has followed the dictates of government policy and the encouragement of some things and discouragement of others through funding patterns. To give an overall impression of the scene we will examine the New South Wales Department of Education's 1983 multicultural education documents. We have taken these because we believe their strengths and weaknesses are the strengths and weaknesses of multicultural education generally.

For a start, ESL education still follows the basic logic of ethnic politics and the Schools Commission's initial understanding of disadvantage. In the words of the Department of Education's Policy Statement,

> The general aim of E.S.L. education may be realized through [developing] students' ability to function effectively in English, in a wide range of situations...[and facilitating] on-going conceptual development while the student has minimal use and understanding of English. (ESL support document 1983:2)

> While it is recognised that the causes of educational disadvantage are numerous, it is acknowledged that minority group status has been a significant factor in contributing to the educational disadvantage of students from some linguistic and cultural minorities...Multicultural education is thus an acknowledgement of the Government's commitment to assist children...to gain access to society's resources through fluency in English. (Multicultural Education Policy Statement 1983:2)

These concerns are well-placed. Many students of non English-speaking background who seemed not to need ESL teaching have been linguistically handicapped by teaching inappropriate to their needs. For a child born in Australia, for example, linguistic development in a language other than English is often disrupted at school entry, and by secondary school the problem has been compounded into a cycle of under-achievement. The root of this problem, despite apparent 'normality' in everyday interchanges, has to be seen as linguistic. It is not beyond remedy, even at the secondary level, if the nature of the task is pin-pointed.

An associated, minor, but serious concern is language-based testing—mis-named 'ability' testing—such as the testing which regulates entry to selective secondary schools. Such tests do not indicate a student's 'natural ability' but their linguistic competency which, in the case of children of non English-speaking background, is more often the result of a history of inappropriate and inadequate language teaching than any personal lack of 'ability'. The Department rightly warns that schools should examine 'methods of student assessment including general ability, testing in relation to language, cultural bias and relevance' (Multicultural Perspectives to Curriculum support document 1983:7).

Similarly, one of the aims of community languages for students of non English-speaking background is 'to facilitate on-going conceptual development' and, for all students, to provide 'successful and satisfying learning experiences and greater opportunities to realize their intellectual potential'. (Community Language Education support document 1983:3, 2).

The policy makes these broad goals clear, but it needs to go further. Community language teaching has to be wary of becoming a minor and tokenistic curriculum activity as has too often been the case in recent practice. Community language or bilingual teaching, when taken seriously, provides students with a continuity of linguistic-cognitive development. As matters commonly stand today, students from non English-speaking backgrounds suffer a serious setback, being forced to abandon one line of linguistic-cognitive development to begin another on entry to school. They can later find themselves in a linguistic void, without the levels of linguistic competence in English enjoyed by their peers from English-speaking backgrounds and with a linguistic development in their family's language stalled or virtually terminated. Community language teaching is thus only secondarily about making 'ethnic communities feel at home', or 'feel involved', or to 'reflect ethnic backgrounds in school programming'. Making these factors explicitly subordinate would ensure that short-term or unsystematic programmes are seen as unacceptable.

Particularly in secondary schools, the notion of 'community' languages as distinct from 'academic' languages has been problematic. Language learning is an exercise with intellectual validity in its own right. Multiculturalism becomes dangerously tokenistic when learning Arabic is seeen as less intellectually valid in its own right, than learning Latin or learning English. Again, such tokenism can be obviated only when community involvement is seen as a minor objective of language programmes. With a stronger intellectual commitment, community language teaching programmes could never (in comparison with other language teaching) be interpreted merely as a gesture to the communities.

A related question is that of 'ethnic schools', which have been studied in some detail. (cf. Tsounis, 1974, Kringas & Lewins, 1980) The structural problem is that they are an inadequate second-best to integrated community language teaching in conventional day-schools. It is now widely recognised that community languages need to be seen as integral, normal and essential aspects of fulfilling educational objectives about equality of educational access and outcome. They also need to be more than mere vehicles for maintaining the culture of minority groups, peripheral to 'real' education. Finally, there is the problem of teaching qualification in ethnic schools. Language competence is not enough. Community language teachers need to be highly qualified as teachers and conscious of broad educational objectives.

In its 'socio-cultural' guise, multicultural education moves away from ethnic politics into cultural pluralism. Here it has two functions. Broadly, it is a rationale for a particular social project. More narrowly, it prescribes curriculum content. At these points, it becomes more problematic.

The 'culture' of multiculturalism is still conceived narrowly, though this is not openly admitted. The meaning of 'culture' for the Department of Education's policy and support documents is nowhere specified. Suffice it to say, it is synonymous with 'ethnic' and is not comparable with 'other overlapping identities such as those related to age, sex, occupation, social class and place of residence' (Ethnic Studies support document 1983:1). Suggested lesson plans give the strongest indication about what is really meant by studying culture in variety in Australia. The first two of three suggestions in the Ethnic Studies paper (1983:6) are as follows:

> Make, compare and record the different ways of preparing culturally specific dishes which have the same ingredients. Examine the different utensils used. Examine the importance of such dishes to the ethnic groups. Examine different ways of celebrating similar events, such as baptisms, marriages, namedays, Easter, Ramadan and spring festivals.

In other places 'culture' is reduced even further to feelings, frames of mind, personal values or attitudes which can be chosen or dropped at whim. Culture is not only narrowly conceived but considered merely subjective. Abandoning the reforming thrust of ethnic politics entirely, the Multicultural Perspectives statement (1983:2) says that 'all multicultural education processes are fundamentally attitudinal'. The implication is that Australia will be a better place simply with a general change of heart: self-esteem and tolerance for all. Multiculturalism is a pycho-moral quest.

There is also a tendency in this narrow view of culture-for-multiculturalism to dwell on what is traditional. To find the culture of the dominant group, to be consistent, we should look for the pretty and the traditional: Anglo-Saxon Celtic would then equal Irish ditties, Yorkshire pudding and white Christmases. But surely McDonalds and Channel Nine are culture as much as souvlaki and folksongs on 2EA. And so are competitive egoism, filling out social security forms and cursing a traffic jam. We have to wonder at the policy demands for 'authenticity' as a standard by which to judge a multicultural curriculum (Multicultural Perspectives support document 1983: 5, 6).

A curriculum consequence of this simplistic cultural pluralism is to trivialise culture and thereby to draw stereotyped peculiarities. This can be aimed to produce a sense of 'personal worth', despite relative failure or success in the mainstream cultural game of Western industrialism. But this process can also foster a plurality of cultural chauvinisms—pride in cultural pecularities of a fairly superficial order. The counter-balance to this is the repeated assertion that multiculturalism is for national cohesion (a new and stronger feature of the 1983 Department of Education policy, compared with the 1981 policy). However, this is an equally superficial view, limited to identity in the nationalist sense.

Finally, this view of multiculturalism, almost despite itself, ends up singling out those of non English-speaking background from the rest. After all, it is here that the tourist's, or multiculturalist's, eye for the exotic or the traditional is most easily satisfied. In the 'multicultural classroom', students will look at 'their own cultures'. In 'the monocultural classroom. . . first hand information may be limited' and 'school exchanges, excursions, visitors and correspondence' would be appropriate multicultural resource stratagems (Ethnic Studies support document 1983:5–7). Despite stated intentions, the emphasis is not on studying how we are all encultured beings, but on studying 'ethnic culture', crudely understood and conveniently equated with the 'wogs'.

Cultural pluralism of this variety ultimately comes to grief, however, with its concomitant relativist ethics. If all cultures are equal and to be respected for the sake of the self-esteem of their participants, what do we do about threads within cultures which are endemically racist, sexist and anti-liberal? Multiculturalism has problems with any statements which are mandatory, such as those about non-sexist education, because the mandatoriness implies that not all cultural viewpoints are relative. Some are not to be respected as equally valid and laudable. Similarly, the whole thrust of multiculturalism is against racism and prejudice, but this contradicts the 'tolerance' of cultural pluralism. Racism and discrimination are simply not to be tolerated. The solution to cultural conflict according to the policy therefore, is 'negotiation' or the 'management of cultural difference' which, given the implementation of certain social values viewed as mandatory in education, can be no more than talking 'them' into 'our' way of thinking, nicely. For that matter, the whole principle of negotiation is entirely foreign (indeed, a sign of educational degeneracy) to some cultural groupings. Philosophically, cultural pluralism can come to grips with none of these dilemmas.

Conclusion

What would a better multicultural education policy look like? First, throughout school policy and curricula, non-racism, non-prejudice and anti-discrimination should constitute a mandatory school ethnic and be mandatory areas of study (in the manner of the guidelines on non-sexism). Where simplistic pluralism has failed, through the mere describing of attractive differences in the hope that tolerance will be absorbed by osmosis, the resulting problems must be tackled head on.

Second, culture has to be viewed more broadly. There is cultural singularity in Australia as well as cultural plurality, and the two have to be seen in dynamic interrelation. The cultural singularity is Western industrialism, with its particular skills, motivations to succeed and class relationships. Important cultural changes occur for those who, for example, have migrated from village agrarian regions to cities. The relative independence granted to family members by wage-work has a profound effect. If the structural foundations of the extended family are removed, its basis either becomes more strongly moral, conservative and ideological, or it begins to break down. In adjusting to Western industrialism, profound cultural change is to be found in almost all aspects of being, from notions of time (clock in/clock out, week/weekend) to the different kinds of abstract social thought now needed for basic interaction (e.g. understanding of prices, banks, computers and red lights). The cultural pluralist understanding fails in so far as there is more to the 'cohesion' of the 'nation' than just 'identity'. The nice ideology of pluralism likes to ignore the deeply felt traumas in the material necessities of adjustment (or frustration and failure). At the same time it ignores the structures of class and their dynamics, which cut across ethnic groupings. Moreover, its interest in cultural change is limited by its practical emphasis on the traditional. Cultural dynamism in Australia is almost invariably pointed in the direction of the skills and values of Western industrialism. This is an historical statement, not a value judgement. Students should study this process with an eye to evaluating critically what, in their opinion, is a loss and what is not.

Finally, multiculturalism, if the word has not been irretrievably devalued by cultural pluralism, should not be seen as a *fait accompli* but a social project or prescription. It should question the core cultural game, in the fashion of ethnic politics in its stronger moments. Its focus should be a strong opposition to all forms of discrimination, even if they can be classed as long-cherished cultural practices. For those of non English-speaking background, it should seek to modify structures and mainstream cultural arrangements to give them more of a 'fair go'. Cultural pluralism only obfuscates such goals.

3

Really educating migrant children

P. Kringas

Source: P. Kringas, 'Really educating migrant children', in J. Jupp, *Ethnic Politics in Australia*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp. 114–25.

This chapter is about ethnicity and equality. The main focus is the possible contribution of ethnic schools to the development of Australia as a truly multi-cultural society. 'True' multi-culturalism is defined as being in agreement with the view expressed on cultural pluralism by Dr McKinnon, past Chairman of the Schools Commission, in his presidential address to ANZAAS in 1975: 'We might agree that a society can only be truly said to be culturally plural if all groups are equal in access to power, status and wealth' (McKinnon, 1975: 22–23).

Townsend has also recognised the various dimensions of a multi-cultural society with his claim that 'equality of opportunity, cultural diversity and mutual tolerance are the three major characteristics of an acceptable multicultural society' (Townsend, 1976: 28). If we accept 'equality of access to power, status and wealth' as one of the necessary conditions for multi-culturalism then clearly Australia is not a multicultural society in spite of repeated claims to the contrary and the accompanying rhetoric. Australian society is a cultural mosaic, but also a class society and hence structured in a vertical system of ethnic stratification. To this extent multi-culturalism is an objective to be achieved rather than an accurate description of contemporary Australian society.

The often repeated claim that 'Australia is a multi-cultural society' is merely highlighting the ethnic heterogeneity of the society and ignores the political nature of ethnic relations and the dimensions of power and hegemony which are an important, if not fundamental, part of ethnic relations. One reason why this apolitical view of multi-culturalism has developed is because the fact of ethnic heterogenity as a stable state preceded adequate theoretical representations of the nature of the Australian social system, which were still locked into notions of 'melting-pot' and Anglo-conformity (Bullivant, 1977: 27). Lewins (1978a: 11, 12) has identified two apolitical uses of 'multi-culturalism':

1. *Demographic Multiculturalism* which simply acknowledges the diversity of ethnic populations in Australia, often in numerical terms, by noticing but not valuing this diversity.
2. *Holistic Multiculturalism* regards mutual understanding and tolerance ....within a context of unity and diversity as characterising the sort of relationship which can and should exist between Australians and ethnics ...In reconciling the needs of the host society and its ethnic constituents,

'holistic multiculturalism' stresses the value of the wholeness and the welfare of the entire society.

It is holistic multi-culturalism rather than demographic multi-culturalism (which is purely descriptive) that is of most importance for this discussion. How are the questions of equality and ethnicity conceptualised in this 'model' of multi-culturalism? The most common model of the opportunity structure consistent with this view of holistic multi-culturalism is that represented by the metaphor of a 'social ladder' which implies that anyone, regardless of background factors, can make it to the top. This model is described by Wiley: 'the ladder is a straight one and no rungs are missing. Secondly, it can be climbed and the means of climbing are the same at all levels. It is implicit that ability and hard work determine one's place on the ladder' (1965: 148).

This model, which tends to be the view from the top and espoused by those who have made it, is often used as justification for the social system. It suggests that 'migrants will be economically located according to the same principles as apply to the native born, presumably on the basis of "merit" of some kind', (Martin, 1981: 35). Not surprisingly, this position reflects dominant class values such as individualistic competitiveness and material success. I would further maintain that this model is the dominant ideology which is transmitted and perpetuated in social institutions of which the school is probably the most significant.

To what extent does this social ladder model of the opportunity structure represent reality as far as ethnic groups are concerned? A number of researchers have highlighted the over-representation of some migrant ethnic groups, mainly Southern European, in occupations at the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy (Zubrzycki, 1960; Borrie, 1964; Birrell and Birrell, 1981; O'Malley, 1978). With respect to income, the Poverty Inquiry found that 12 per cent of recently arrived non-English-speaking migrants had income below the poverty line after housing costs had been taken into consideration. This is almost double the overall figure of 6.7 per cent for all adult income units (Henderson, 1975: 269). Jean Martin (1972b: 15) also has pointed out that 'to the extent that ethnic culture becomes associated with socio-economic inferiority, we will develop a culturally as well as structurally stratified society'.

To put this 'social fact' of ethnic stratification into perspective, it might be expected that some recently arrived migrants, given their background occupational and educational experiences, would be over-represented at the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy. However, given what we know about inter-generational occupational mobility, especially the noticeable *lack* of upward mobility out of unskilled and semi-skilled occupations (Broom and Jones, 1976), a major concern is with the extent to which children of some migrant categories do not have equal opportunity relative to children of Anglo-Australian parents (Martin, 1981). Martin has emphasised this concern by showing that non-English migrants are over-represented at the lower end of the socio-economic scale and have not the same degree of upward social and occupational mobility that other groups have (Martin, 1972b).

The logical connection between the social ladder metaphor of the occupational structure and the holistic multi-culturalism view is the exclusion of any notion of structured inequality, that is, of ethnic stratification. One model of the opportunity system which does recognise the link in the social structure between ethnicity and stratification is

Wiley's concept of the 'ethnic mobility trap'. In this model the opportunity system is visualised as 'a tree and mobility as tree climbing. . . The limbs are like [*sic.*], leading gently upward but primarily outward and away from all chance of serious ascent. Normally the climber who wants to hit the top will avoid the limbs as much as possible and concentrate on the trunk' (Wiley, 1967: 148–9). The trunk of the tree represents the superordinate opportunity system of the dominant (Anglo-Australian) group while the limbs represent the respective subordinate opportunity systems of various ethnic categories and groups. In order to advance in the majority's system a member of an ethnic group would need to throw off his or her ethnicity, descend the limb to the trunk and advance up the trunk of the tree. In the context of this representation of the opportunity system the essence of the mobility trap is this: 'the means for moving up within a stratum are contrary to those for moving to the next higher stratum. In other words, there is conflict between intra- and inter-stratum mobility norms' (Wiley, 1967: 149).

The conflict which Wiley refers to can be represented as the problem of trade-off between ethnicity and social mobility. That is, consistent with the mobility trap model, in order to be upwardly mobile, a member of a minority ethnic group would need to relinquish his or her ethnic traits and adopt the normative and relational characteristics of the majority group. Any attempt to achieve an egalitarian multi-cultural society entails the development of a society in which ethnicity and equality are not mutually exclusive but can co-exist. Metaphorically, this would mean replacing the 'tree' model with a candelabrum in which the opportunity system of the ethnic groups parallels the trunk of the Anglo-Australian group. Even though Wiley's model recognises ethnic stratification as an important component of the opportunity system and the resultant constraint on social mobility for members of minority groups, it is located within the holistic multi-culturalism view. That is, it focuses on dominant group cultural characteristics while ignoring the political, ideological, economic and legal dominance of the 'trunk', and to this extent it suffers from the one-dimensional limitation of holistic multi-culturalism.

There is an inherent logical inconsistency with any theoretical attempt to combine ethnicity and equality in a holistic multi-culturalism view of ethnic group relations. This inconsistency, which I call the ethnic dilemma, arises because of the contradiction between achievement and ascription criteria for the evaluation of individual performance (with acknowledgements to Talcott Parsons). In the model of ethnic opportunity systems as presented by Wiley, upward social mobility is a function of achievement on certain criteria, for example, education, occupation, income. In other words, in an open, democratic, egalitarian society liberal philosophy maintains that criteria of evaluation should be achievement-based rather than ascriptive. This is consistent with the social significance of occupation, education and wealth for determining social relationships and status in industrialised, highly urbanised societies. Furthermore, this approach views ethnic group relations as basically a function of attitudes. The argument would run something like this: migrants have the worst jobs and are over-represented at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy because members of the dominant group regard them as inferior and discriminate against them. If we could only get Australians to change their attitudes towards migrants and treat them as equals then inequality would disappear. But discrimination, prejudice and attitudes of social superiority and inferiority are symptomatic of the underlying economic relations of production in which the dominant group maintains its position through power, social control and ideological hegemony. It is the social existence of individuals within the capitalist system which determines their consciousness, that is, attitudes (Gramsci, 1957).

The ethnic dilemma, then, is basically a function of the contradiction between holistic multi-culturalism and achievement criteria. The basic assumption of this view is that members of ethnic minorities have the right to maintain their identity and hence a 'multi-cultural society' is the desired alternative to an 'Anglo-conformist' or 'melting-pot' product. But, on the other hand, individuals in an egalitarian society should be judged on what they do, not on who they are. This dilemma can be presented in diagrammatic form (Figure 8.1).

In Figure 8.1 cells 1 and 4 represent the logical couplings. A multi-cultural society, by definition, recognises the ascriptive characteristics of individuals and attempts to maintain and take account of these characteristics. In a culturally homogeneous society ethnicity is no longer an important factor for either the constitution of that society or the criteria of evaluation of individuals in that society. The ethnic dilemma emerges when an egalitarian multi-cultural society is represented by the situation in cell 2, namely, the evaluation of all individuals by achievement criteria in a culturally plural society (that is, to apply ethnicity as the basis for constituting a pluralist society but to ignore this criterion in the evaluation of the performance of members). Consequently, in holistic multi-culturalism, equality and ethnicity are incompatible. Where one group has effective control over major social institutions it appears that equality and ethnicity are mutually exclusive. The alternatives seem to be either multi-culturalism with inequality, or homogeneity (assimilation) with equality.

Effective control is largely maintained by unintended consequences of the hegemononic forces in educational and other social institutions. These include the promotion of Anglo-Australian values (Martin, 1978), the subtle effects of different 'linguistic codes' and the lack of involvement and participation of various minority ethnic group members in the design and functioning of schooling (Gilmour and Lansbury, 1978).

Figure 8.1 The ethnic dilemma

Type of Society Desired	*Criteria for Personal Evaluation*	
	Ascriptive	Achievement
Multi-cultural (pluralist)	1	2
Ethnically homogeneous (assimilationist)	3	4

Given the nature of holistic multiculturalism and its apparent predominance as the framework for ethnic group relations and government policy, it is not surprising that sub-areas within this field, for example, multicultural education, also reflect this apolitical view. For instance, the five definitions of migrant education presented in a recent government report on this area all dealt solely with language and culture (Nicholl, 1977: 10).

Some writers in the area of multi-cultural education have commented upon the lack of issues identified in the area (Martin, 1978: Chapter 4) and have recognised that questions about ethnic minorities in respect of education would entail questions about participation in the power structure, as well as socio-psychological questions. Claydon, for instance, says: 'Questions of this kind are uncomfortably productive of "hot potatoes". They cannot be cosily isolated as "purely educational". The temptation within the system must be to shelve the issue which engenders them and to hope that neglect will dissipate it' (1975: 53).

With the logical connection and compatibility between the conceptualisation of multi-cultural education and holistic multi-culturalism, it might be expected that discussions of ethnic schools would reflect the same uncritical, apolitical and narrow cultural-linguistic approach. Consider Martin's summary of the popular definitions of the role of ethnic schools being advanced:

> 1 ethnic schools as harmful competition for the child's time and attention.
> 2 [This definition] acknowledges the right of ethnic communities to seek to transmit their cultural heritage through ethnic schools, but sees no place for these schools, in the established educational system and denies that they have any claim on public funds.
> 3 . . . ethnic schools can be integrated with day schools to play their part in the teaching of community languages and in multicultural education.
> 4 ethnic schools as the agents of ethnic communities may be defined as the appropriate bodies to take responsibility for teaching community languages and cultures on behalf of the education system as a whole, which implies that they should be publicly funded (Martin, 1978: 130–1).

What these definitions have in common is that they are concerned with the location of ethnic schools and their relationship to the dominant education system rather than to their specific function, which is taken for granted as the transmission of culture and language (Wiseman, 1974: 147; Smolicz, 1979a: 68–9; Smolicz and Wiseman, 1971: 8–9). Ideas about the role of ethnic schools in a multi-cultural society and the role that these schools could play are constrained by their location within the view of holistic multi-culturalism (EAC, 1978: 147).

Ethnic schools are generally seen in the light of duplicating the teaching of migrant language and culture in government schools (Report of the Committee on the Teaching of Migrant Languages in Schools, 1976). Smolicz, for instance, says:

> Even when the teaching of ethnic languages and cultures becomes widespread in Australian schools, there will still be room for continued existence of ethnic schools in certain areas and for certain minority groups. In larger communities, some parents may continue to send their children to such schools to supplement the teaching of ethnic languages and cultures in Australian schools (1979a: 69).

This brief look at the role of ethnic schools has focused on some views expressed in the literature. What about the views of the participants themselves? The following information is from a case study of two Italian ethnic schools in Melbourne and five Greek schools in Sydney (Kringas and Lewins, 1981). Organisers of these schools and teachers were asked a number of questions on various aspects of multi-cultural education and the role of ethnic schools in Australian society. Most respondents saw migrant education as the teaching of English (and possibly the history and social aspects of migration) to newly arrived migrants, whereas multi-cultural education was seen as primarily the teaching of migrant (community) languages in school to either children of migrants or to all children. All respondents saw the role of ethnic schools as teaching language so that children can converse at home with their parents: and some added the importance of ethnic schools for teaching culture. These tentative findings have, in general been supported by other studies of participants' definitions of the role of ethnic schools (Smolicz and Secombe, 1977: 18), and are consistent with the holistic multi-culturalism view of ethnic relations.

One reason why holistic multi-culturalism views ethnic group relations as a horizontal structure and ignores the vertical dimension is that it accepts as its basic assumption the idea that pluralism and stratification must be kept analytically distinct (Smooha, 1975: 69). This is misleading. Cultural cleavages, not accidentally, denote power relationships, such that 'majority-minority' concepts used to designate the nature of the relationships refer to class, status, power and social control and not simply to numerical superiority and inferiority. Cultural relations are political relations.

What sort of approach to ethnic group relations can be developed which recognises the political nature of these relations and which then makes possible the analysis and reconciliation of ethnicity and equality as problems within multi-cultural education? Lewins is again initially helpful in this regard. He identifies a third view of multi-culturalism in the literature which he calls political multi-culturalism:

> This perspective emphasises the role of political processes in Australian-ethnic relations and regards ethnic groups as legitimate interest groups and as having the responsibility for the realization of ethnic goals. In this approach, the focus is on the political nature of relations between the parts (usually Australians and various ethnic communities) rather than on the needs of the whole society (Lewins, 1978a: 13).

One other writer who has recognised the political nature of ethnic group relations in Australia is Jean Martin:

> Ethnic pluralism in Australia is not, then, the safely cultural, apolitical phenomenon that some bland interpretations would lead us to think. Nor is there any reason to wish that this is what it should be. When every other group in our society claims the right to be politicized—from women at the most inclusive end of the scale to convicts, perhaps at the most exclusive—it is hard to justify denying this right, or thinking it can be denied to ethnic groups (1976: 25).

Australia, then, is not the open society that the social ladder metaphor would have us believe; in most cases ethnicity, especially in the case of Southern Europeans, is one of the attributes in our society which hinders movement up the ladder. Yet this 'model' of the opportunity system is the dominant ideology which is practised in many of society's institutions. The effect of this dominant ideology on individual beliefs and behaviour is well expressed by Gramsci's notion of hegemony:

> Hegemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total . . . which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limit of common sense for most people under its sway . . . It is a whole body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and of his world. It is a set of meanings and values which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality

> beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives (Williams, 1973, pp. 8–9).

Hegemony represents the ability of the dominant group to perpetuate the social ladder model as an accurate representation of the way things really are. Althusser has shown how social institutions, for example, the family, the media and especially the school, socialise individuals into this ideological hegemony (Althusser, 1972) and thus reproduce the relations of capitalist production. Consequently, the school as an 'ideological state apparatus' is responsible for perpetuating the 'social ladder' model of the opportunity structure:

> The political apparatus by subjecting individuals to the political State ideology, the 'indirect' (parliamentary) or 'direct' (Plebiscitary or fascist) 'democratic' ideology . . . the communications apparatus by cramming every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc. . . . This concert is dominated by a single score, occasionally disturbed by contradictions (those of the remnants of former ruling classes, those of the proletarians and their organisations): the score of the Ideology of the current ruling class . . . Nevertheless, in this concert, one ideological State apparatus certainly has the dominant role, although hardly anyone lends an ear to its music: it is so silent! This is the school (Althusser, 1972, pp. 259–60).

Education then, is not politically neutral, it functions 'as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it . . .' (Freire, 1972a: 13–14; 1972b). But Freire has also recognised the possibility of using schooling to bring individuals to a deeper critical awareness of the way the social system is constituted and the implications which flow from this structuring. This process of 'bringing people to a deeper awareness' he calls 'conscientisation'. As Lally (1978: 14) says:

> Reaching this critical level of awareness is an essential first step on the road to freeing those groups who are oppressed by the system. It enables such groups to come to the realisation that they are considerably constrained by the system but that their situation is historical, not eternal, and that it can therefore be changed.

Consciousness-raising, then, is only step one in Freire's strategy. The second step involves 'continuous revolutionary practice', that is action upon aspects of the structure in order to change it. There have been some examples of this process being applied with success at the community level (Williams and Rennie, 1972). The implications that this view of education and the social system have for ethnicity and equality are that the latter are dependent, in the first instance, on the need to educate exploited members of society about 'structured inequality', and how the social system constrains the life chances of individuals depending on their location in the social structure. In a Weberian sense societies are hierarchically differentiated along the dimensions of class, status and power and there is an unequal distribution of people's life chances in terms of their access to income, occupation, education. This approach is not incompatible with a Marxian theory of the formation of societies so long as life chances are regarded as the consequences of the economic mode of production (economic base and the superstructure—for example, ideological state appartuses). To attempt to supply the exploited with the necessary skills to be able to compete for society's resources is no solution as, on the one hand, this has the effect of perpetuating the mystification about the opportunity system and on the other, as far as ethnicity is concerned, if taken to its logical conclusion, suggests that the best way to equip migrant children to compete is to remove their ethnicity, that is promote assimilation.

Applying these concepts to the role of 'multi-cultural education' means, for one thing, that this education ought to be concerned with areas other than simply language and culture. Matthews, as one author who agrees, sees multi-cultural education as including 'those programs intended to convey the multicultural nature of a society to all the children who live in it'. These programs contain five areas concerned with:

- fostering values which support multiculturalism;
- reducing intergroup tensions, prejudices and discrimination;
- showing particularly in history, geography, social studies, and the like, the reality of multiculturalism in Australia;
- showing the unique contributions that all ethnic groups have made to Australia; and
- developing in the child a sense of security and personal worth in being a member of a culturally plural society (Matthews, 1975: 20).

In light of the view of education presented in this chapter, the problem with Matthew's model of multi-cultural education is that it is supportive and uncritical of the social system. Being located within a holistic multi-culturalism model and being solely concerned with cultural pluralism, it does not recognise ethnic stratification nor the political nature of ethnic relations. Another proposal for multi-cultural education which bears considerable resemblance to Matthew's multi-cultural education program is Bullivant's 'polyethnic survival curriculum'. Bullivant sees the need for 'survival knowledge' to be taught to migrant children but locates this type of knowledge in a holistic multi-culturalism model:

> belonging to society signifies that one is in a group of people who are dependent upon one another for survival within their habitat . . . and the more effectively a person's behaviour has been programmed or patterned to carry out roles in such an action system, the greater the share of resources he can obtain . . . Survival knowledge about competing for social and economic resources should be taught to children from ethnic groups if they are not to be deprived of competitively fair life chances (Bullivant, 1977: 29).

The 'survival curriculum' developed by Bullivant has five basic components:

1 communicative competence
2 numeracy skills
3 political and economic competence
4 moral and social competence
5 environmental awareness (Bullivant, 1977: 29–30).

Bullivant's curriculum is a step in the right direction but suffers from the failing that the social system is taken as a given, and is seen as 'justly competitive'. All that is necessary is to equip deprived individuals such as migrant children with the necessary skills.

A third model is Lally's notion of 'social system education' which contains four skills:

(i) Communicative competence
(ii) Pragmatic numeracy
(iii) Relevant Law
(iv) Practice in identifying and confronting authentic contradictions between rhetoric and social structure (Lally, 1978: 11).

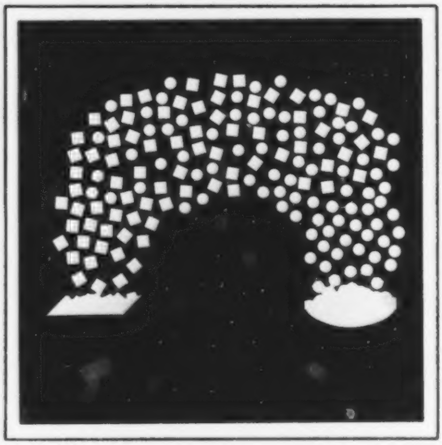
'Communicative competence' is the ability to express ideas clearly and coherently and sustain logical argument, as well as the ability to see through rhetoric, plus reading and writing skills. 'Pragmatic numeracy' refers to competence in using numbers encountered in everyday life plus a course in descriptive statistics. 'Relevant law' refers to those elements of law which touch the individual most closely in her/his everyday life, for example, rental agreements, taxation, etc., plus insights into the important legal rights and obligations. The fourth and most important skill refers to: 'contradictions that relate directly to the lives of the individuals or the group under discussion ... [contradictions] are a direct result of the position you occupy in the social structure. This kind of contradiction can lie dormant until an issue emerges which crystallizes it (Lally, 1978: 14).

Lally's 'social system education' is intended to be included in the general curriculum for *all* schools. Similarly, Bullivant's 'survival curriculum' should, according to its originator, be implemented in 'polyethnic schools', that is, schools where the pupils are largely a mixture of children of native-born parents and of migrants (Bullivant, 1977: 30). There is some overlap between the proposals of Bullivant and Lally, and I agree that the various skills they suggest ought to be introduced into the curriculum of regular government day schools. The curriculum I suggest for ethnic schools, which I call 'minority group Education', would supplement the former. Ethnic schools, because of the likelihood of common background of pupils, at least within each school, can have a more focused curriculum. What would 'minority group education' consist of? Bullivant provides the theme: 'By concentrating on the cultural content side of the ethnic problem we lose sight of the societal side, i.e. *the implications of what it means to be a member of an ethnic group, which is itself within a wider society*' (Bullivant, 1977: 29; emphasis added). In general then, 'minority group education' attempts in the first instance to inform migrant children of Australian ethnic and race relations: an analysis of the historical development of colonisation and immigration in Australia. The second major component of 'minority group education' would involve language and culture. These need to be taught as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for a multi-cultural society, and would include consideration of language maintenance, which would locate language in its social context and analyse the relationship between dominant and subordinate languages. The third component entails 'practice in identifying and confronting authentic contradictions between rhetoric and social structure'. Lally has mentioned the practical problems involved with the implementation of his proposals in government schools and has suggested how this might be achieved (Lally, 1978: 17). Ethnic schools, of course, are not controlled by the state, although some State governments are providing limited financial assistance, and the curricula for these schools are often developed by an education sub-committee or by the organiser(s) concerned. To this extent, then, ethnic communities have considerable autonomy to develop their own curriculum.

'Minority group education', as briefly sketched here, represents step one of Freire's process of conscientisation—raising the level of critical awareness of how the social system constrains individual behaviour and choice, with particular focus on ethnic minority group members. Step two of 'minority group education' would be aimed at praxis to change aspects of the social system affecting the particular location of migrants in the social structure. The aspects which offer the possibility for intervention and change in the short term are at the community level, for example, local administration, public works, housing schemes, etc., and it is at this level that minority group members could have some effect on constraints and contradictions in the system. Ethnic schools are very much community-based and the next step in 'minority group education' would be some form of workshop exercise, which would involve discussion and analysis of the nature of problems at the community level and a strategy for their resolution. Clearly, there are practical problems involved with the implementation of 'minority group education' programs in ethnic schools, the major one being that the ethnic communities must be the instigators of the programs. This would involve considerable discussion with organisers, teachers, parents and children.

The proposals put forward in this chapter are not intended as a detailed account of 'minority group education', but rather to suggest the possibility of an alternative curriculum for ethnic schools which relates to the structure of Australian society and the place of migrants within it. This requires a vastly different conceptualisation of the nature of ethnic relations, multi-cultural education and the role of ethnic schools than is presented in holistic multi-culturalism.

Annotated bibliography



Bottomley, G., & de Lepervanche, M. (eds). *Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Australia* (Studies in Society, 24). George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984.
An excellent collection of previously unpublished papers which look at the issue of how notions of ethnicity, gender and class are related to each other. Of particular interest are the papers by de Lepervanche, Collins and Kalantzis & Cope. The paper by de Lepervanche critically examines van den Berghe's primordial views of ethnicity. The paper by Collins examines questions of class and ethnicity as they relate to the position of migrants in Australia. The paper by Kalantzis & Cope is reprinted in this volume.

Bullivant, B. *The Pluralist Dilemma in Education: Six Case Studies.* George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981.
A very readable comparative study of six pluralist nations which have attempted to implement policies of multiculturalism. The book looks specifically at the developments in educational policy, and draws heavily on theories from anthropology and the sociology of education to show how many multicultural education programs involve misconceptions, oversimplifications and confusions which, Bullivant argues, lead to what he refers to as the central 'dilemma of pluralism'—how much control over political power must remain in the hands of a society's dominant group, and how much can be left in the hands of its constituent and other minority groups. Of particular interest is chapter 6 which provides an excellent account of the historical events leading up to the development and official recognition of the policy of multiculturalism in Australia.

Burnley, I. H., Encel, S., & McCall, G. (eds). *Immigration and Ethnicity in the 1980s* (Australian Studies). Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1985.
This book contains a number of papers which were originally presented at two important conferences on ethnic studies, held at the University of New South Wales in 1980 and 1981. The papers rest on the assumption that ethnicity has become a major social and political force in Australian society and culture and that all social policies must now take the growth of ethnic self-consciousness into account. A lengthy introductory chapter by McCall, Encel & Burnley provides an excellent theoretical overview of the issues, ideas and ideology involved in the debate over ethnicity and its place in Australian society. Chapters 1 and 2 present a historical account of the ethnic composition of Australian population and the discrimination against migrants respectively. Chapters 6 and 7 address specifically educational issues.

Foster, L., & Stockley, D. *Multiculturalism: The Changing Australian Paradigm.* Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, Avon, 1984.
A very readable book which traces the development of Australia's ethnic affairs policy through assimilation and integration to the emergence of multiculturalism. The theoretical framework used in this book to examine the issues of ethnicity in Australia is borrowed largely from the literature in the sociology of knowlege and culture. Chapter 4 contains an interesting discussion of educational programs developed by various state and federal governments to promote multiculturalism. Chapter 5 puts forward some suggestions as to how we might rethink the policy and practice of multiculturalism.

Jupp, J. (ed.). *Ethnic Politics in Australia.* George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984.
This book brings together a number of interesting essays concerned with multiculturalism, migrant settlement, and ethnic participation in Australian politics. Running through many of the essays in this volume is the theme of the continuing debate between those who emphasise ethnicity as a fundamental explanatory notion and those who accord class theoretical primary. The essay by Jakubowicz has been highly influential, and should therefore be one of the first to be read.

Ladd, J. (ed.). *Ethical Relativism.* Wadsworth, Belmont, California, 1973.
This book contains a number of philosophical essays on the topic of ethical relativism. The essays demonstrate how there are many different ways to approach ethnic relativism, but, at the same time, all authors agree that it is a thesis which should be treated as a moral doctrine with important practical implications. Although the book does not mention multiculturalism explicitly, it should provide students with a philosophical background which is so absolutely necessary for a clearer understanding of the issues.

de Lepervanche, M. 'Migrant and Ethnic Groups'. In S. Encel & L. Bryson (eds). *Australian Society,* 4th edn. Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1984.
In this somewhat longer than usual essay, running to some 90 pages, de Lepervanche takes a Marxist perspective to ethnic issues, arguing that it is class inequalities which underlie the social conflicts which are often expressed in the language of race and ethnicity. de Lepervanche discusses the functionalist and 'sociology of knowledge' approaches to ethnic studies and dismisses them as inadequate in explaining the migrant experience in Australia. Her article also contains an excellent critical review of the late Jean Martin's influential work on ethnicity and the sociology of migration.

Miles, R. *Racism and Migrant Labour.* Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1982.
A very useful introduction to 'race relation' studies. This book critically examines a whole variety of studies in the sociology of race and ethnicity and argues that the use of these terms has been ideological in serving the interests of capitalism. Relying heavily on recent works on the nature of ideology, the book shows that, contrary to many sociological claims, Marxism *can* deal with the phenomenon of racism without falling into the trap of economic determinism.

Phillips, D. J., & Houston, J. (eds). *Australian Multicultural Society: Identity, Communication and Decision Making.* Drummond, Melbourne, 1984.
A collection of essays mainly focusing on educational issues, and written largely from a political perspective which is sympathetic to the liberal. democratic view of multiculturalism. Part II, titled 'Communication in the Multicultural Society', contains some very useful papers on such issues as bilingual education, Aboriginal education and its relation to multiculturalism, ethnic schools and the multicultural curriculum.

About the author

Fazal Rizvi is a lecturer at Deakin University. He was born in India and, as a teenager, migrated to Australia in 1967. Before completing his doctorate in philosophy of education from Kings College, University of London, he taught in primary and secondary schools. His academic interests include multiculturalism; policy studies; and ethics and educational administration. He is presently working on a book on Wittgenstein's later philosophy, as it applies to problems in educational theory.

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